

MAY 1 - SUNDIAL BRIDGE & SHASTA DAM, REDDING, CA

We awoke to sunshine and warm temps this morning. I hate to harp on about all the rain and cool temperatures we have had, both at home as well as at the beginning of our trip, but I could get used to this!

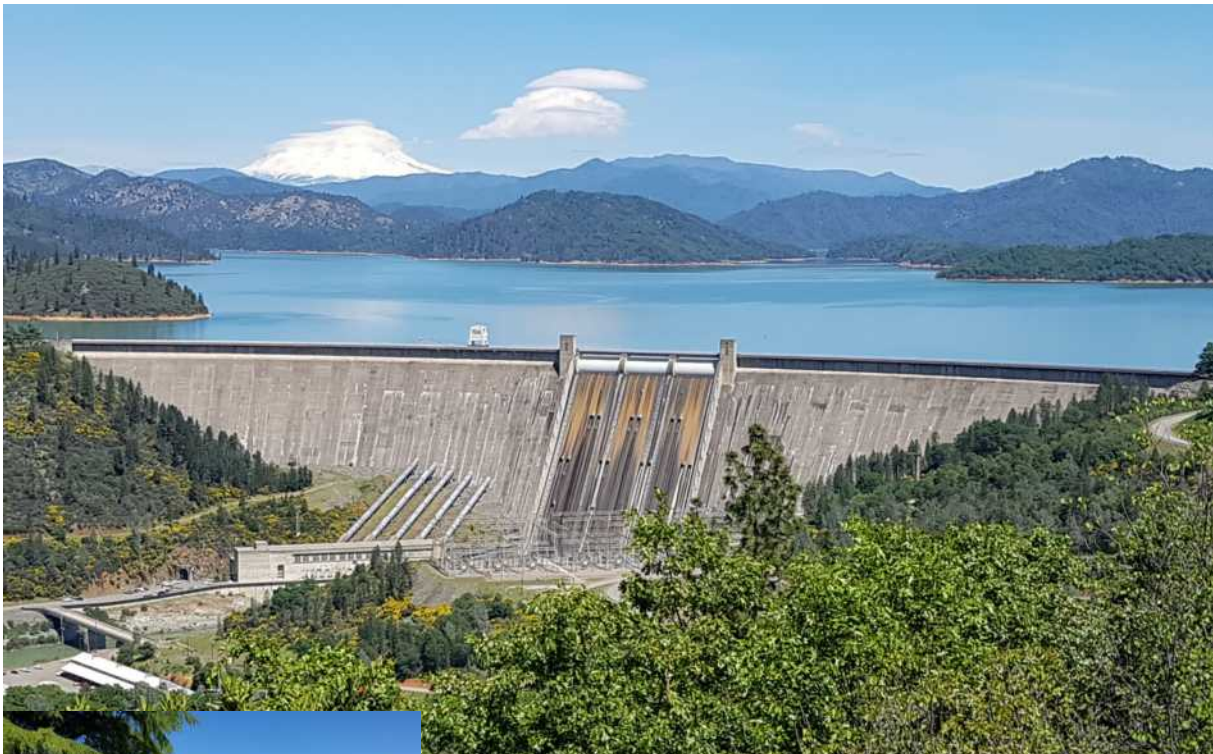


My tour director wanted to visit the Info Center this morning to inquire as to what the roads were like east of here, heading towards Susanville, CA. The Info Centre in Redding is at the Sundial Bridge - one of the items on today's tour list. So off we went.

After strolling across the 700' bridge and back, we enjoyed a coffee, in the shade, just by the bridge. What a delightful way to wile away the morning.

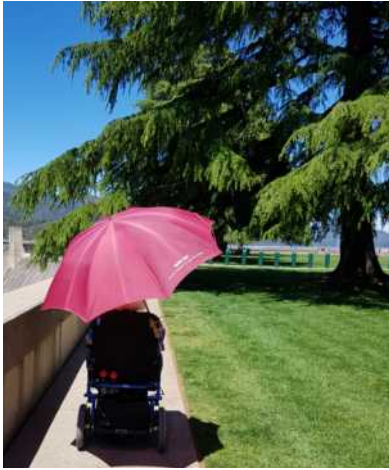
Okay, where to next?? Aha, the Shasta Dam.

Shasta Dam is just a short distance from Shasta Lake, which is not far from Redding. So off we went. What a gorgeous afternoon for a visit to the dam. Here's a view from the road approaching the dam.



These guys aren't messing around when it comes to security at the dam! That's the guard building in the distance.

Jen went "undercover" as we walked across the top of the dam towards the centre. Part way across Jen decided to turn around - it was a very hot day.



I continued on to the spillway section. I wanted to see what it looked like from there.

Ohhhhhh, it's a giant water slide! Yeah, right!



On the left is a picture of the top of the apparatus that was retrofitted a few years ago to allow water to be let in to the turbines from various depths to maintain the "correct" temperature. The "correct" temperature ensures the water leaving the dam is 56°F or less for optimum fish habitat downstream. Pretty clever!

Shasta Dam Water Information	
Lake Elevation	1,057.09
Elevation Last Year	1,056.05
Distance From Crest	9.91
Depth at Dam	507.09
24 hr change	0.16
Storage (acre feet)	4,262,821
Percent Full	94
Inflow cfs	13,131
Shasta Release	10,678
Keswick Release	10,065

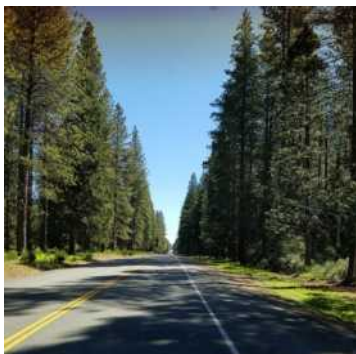
Rain Totals	
July 1 - June 30	0.00
Daily Rain	97.60
Year-to-Date	
Last Year Total	56.23"
Hist. High 1998	116.87"
Hist Low 1977	24.59"

Here's a panoramic view walking back to the Visitors Centre (on the bluff).



We've decided to stay one more night to do some "weekly" chores. We'll head east towards Lassen Volcanic National Park Wednesday. See you there.

MAY 3 - LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK & SUBWAY CAVE



Time to boogey! After 3 days in Redding, CA it's time to head east into the mountains. We are heading towards Reno but our final destination today is unknown. We don't want a repeat of the long day from the coast to Redding a few days ago.

We want to see Lassen Volcanic National Park - it is on our way today. The sun is shining and the temperature is rising as we climb through the pine forests.

We turned off at Lassen NP and drove to the park entrance.



The ranger said the road was closed 10 miles in due to snow - 6' of it still. She explained that it wasn't just the accumulation of snow, it was the damage the winter storms did to the trees/vegetation in the park that can take up to

2 months to clear and re-open the roads. Apparently the south entrance still has snow up to the eaves of the buildings!



We know we will be visiting other national parks this year so we purchased an annual pass, good for the national parks and many other sites in the US.

The ranger suggested we take a walk along the shores of Lake Manzanita. There are really nice views of Mount Lassen. It's sunny and warm - so let's go!

The pine cones are big in the park, but the sugar bush pines are the biggest - up to 24" tall!



I asked the ranger about camping in the area and she suggested Cave campground just a short distance from Old Station, just up the road. She also suggested we should check out Subway Cave - a lava tube.

We had a look at the campground and decided to stay the night. No services, but nice large sites in the trees. A bargain at \$16!



I decided to check out the Subway Cave - I dunno what part of "cave" didn't register, but I got to the cave entrance and realized I should have brought a flashlight. I walked into the cave a short distance, then decided to return to camp.





SUBWAY CAVE

816 length - 1300 feet
Average Cave Temperature - 46 degrees

Welcome to Subway Cave! This easy 1/3 mile walk will lead you through the underground world of a lava tube. It begins and ends at the parking area. Take a good light (or two), a jacket, and follow the interpretive signs for a self-guiding tour.



After tea, I walked back to the cave and strolled through it, flashlight in hand. The temperature is a constant 46°F year round. When you think a few thousand years ago, hot molten lava was flowing right where I was standing, it was pretty impressive. Pictures don't do the cave justice.

We settled in for the evening and watched a Netflix movie that I had downloaded before we left. Tomorrow we head further east to Reno - the biggest little city in the world. See you there!

MAY 04 - CONCRETE JUNGLE (RENO) & ESCAPE TO VIRGINIA CITY, NV

After a delightful stay at Cave campground, we headed east this morning towards Reno, NV. Something tells me that we are at altitude - look at the snow on the side of the road!



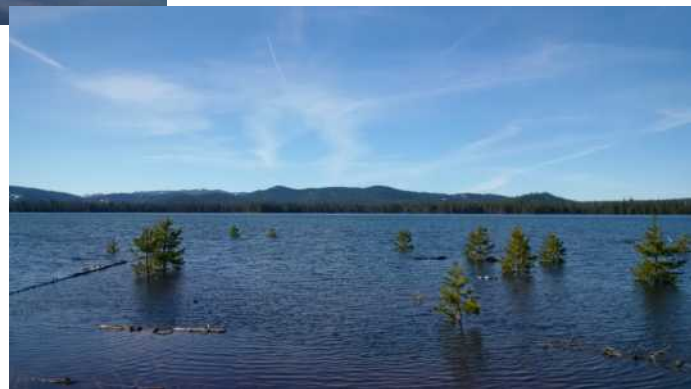
As we continued towards Reno, we passed two reservoirs: McCoy Flat and Hog Flat. As you can see there is water everywhere and there's still snow in the mountains waiting to melt!



I had programmed our GPS for the Information Centre in Reno. Who knew it was right downtown?!

I really don't understand why some of the US states don't put tourist info centres where you enter the state?!

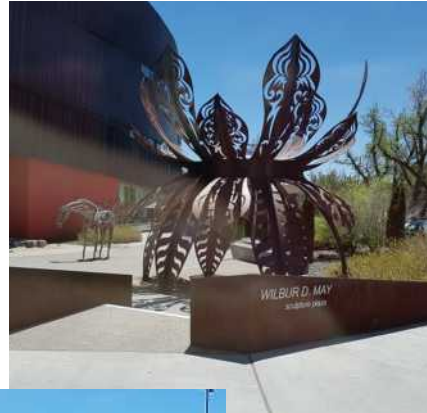
It was the same thing in Oregon - the first info centre driving south on I5 is downtown Portland!



Okay, rant over. We quickly got out of downtown and headed for our destination - Virginia City.

On our maps Virginia City is equidistant from Tahoe, Reno, and Carson City - a perfect place to spend a few days and explore the area.

Reno: "the biggest little city in the world". Uh huh... I don't know when that moniker was last used, but today it is just a giant concrete slab with buildings and freeways scattered all over the place. Not our idea of a place we want to spend any amount of time exploring.



I set our GPS (Maud) for Virginia City which got us off the freeway. I stopped just afterwards and reprogrammed Maud for an RV park we had the address to in Virginia City - might as well go directly there.

And then we started an almighty climb - in 8 miles we climbed 2,800!!! The views were spectacular.



The road was very windy and steep. It hugged the mountainside as we climbed towards the heavens. Do we believe Maud—is she leading us astray or is there an easier way??

We persevered and crested the Geiger Summit at 6,789'. On the other side, we dropped a few hundred feet and rolled into Virginia City.





I won't bore you with how we got lost looking for the RV park. I'll just mention that Virginia City is on the side of a large hill, so while the main drag is across the hill (on a slight incline), the side roads off the main drag are very steep (a la some streets in San Francisco). We were looking for B street and ended up at K street way down the hillside. After stopping for directions, we climbed back up the hillside and found the RV park. Afterwards, in the office, I learned that GPS does not work - it leads you to the other end of town! Been there, done that!

We set up camp, with a view of the old cemetery, then went for pizza and beer for dinner.



We sat at the bar and enjoyed some local brew. I had a "dirty Wookie", a 7.2% dark brew.

Mmmm, delicious. Jen had a stout that I found a little too nutty.

We've decided to stay a second night and explore Virginia City tomorrow. See you then.

MAY 5 - VIRGINIA CITY, DAYTON, & SILVER CITY, NV

Today is a rest day - we don't really have to go anywhere so we enjoyed a leisurely morning at the RV park.

Around 11 a.m., we drove into Virginia City to have a look around - easier for Jen if we have her w/chair close by, if needed. We parked Alfie on a side street and walked up a short hill to the main drag. And what did we find?! Stink-e and his sweetheart, Adeline. Quite the pair!



We strolled up and down the boardwalks and soon found ourselves outside of The Roasting House, a coffee shop. Good idea; time for a coffee!

With all due respect to Virginia City, it does appear today to be mostly a tourist trap. Sure there is a lot of history in the hills around the town but now tourist wander the boardwalks. We wondered what it must be like here in the height of summer.

At the end of a small, side "alley" was the Virginia City jail. After getting out of jail, as we walked to the main street, I noticed this sign. How true!



Here is a monument to the Comstock Lode. Be sure to zoom in and read the inscription.



We then visited Saint Mary's in the Mountains. Afterwards, I told Jen that I wanted to find the V&T (Virginia & Truckee) train station - a short drive around the corner from the church as it turned out.



Not much happening at this time of the year at the train station - tourist season is still a ways off. On our way back to the RV park, we saw wild horses.

I suggested to Jen that we drive through 6-Mile Canyon which heads almost due east from Virginia City. This was the way I wanted to leave but a local suggested that recent work on the road had left it in pretty rough shape, especially for an RV. Okay, no trailer in tow today, let's give it a try.

Well a short time later we were on the desert floor - the highway was in great shape. So that's the way we'll leave tomorrow.



We drove into Dayton, 6 miles from the junction and got some cheap gas - \$2.53/gal. I programmed Maud for Virginia City and we headed back. Maud decided to take us the "usual" Hwy 341 route so I obliged. Part way up the hill, the "truck route" diverges to avoid the 15% grade through Silver City. Why not, eh? 15% with no trailer is easy so up we went.

Silver City has seen better days, but we couldn't help thinking what this area was like 150 years ago.



A couple of miles further and we were back to Virginia City



Interestingly, the Fourth Ward School, referred to as "The Last One Standing," is the only four-story wooden structure of its type

We were relaxing in the rig a short while later when I heard what I thought was a steam engine whistle. Gotta go check this out. I drove to the V&T station but couldn't see anything. So I continued along the road at stopped at an overlook of the maintenance yard for the railroad. I heard the whistle again and noticed crossing signals in the distance flashing red. Then I saw a short train moving up the

line. Back in Alfie I headed back to the station. The V&T crew were moving an old wooden parlour car into the station with a 44 ton diesel locomotive. Apparently there is something happening Saturday. What, I don't know.



I returned to the RV park and Jen and I walked over to the cemetery to have a look around. As the literature stated, no one "famous" is buried here, just miners, workers, and local folk, but they came from all over the world.



Zoom in to see where this gentleman hailed from.



Here's a look back at Virginia City. We're camped in the red circle, behind the vegetation.



Tomorrow's forecast is for rain, so we're only going to go down the hill and see if we can get into Dayton State Park. See you there.

MAY 6 - NEVADA TRAIN MUSEUM, CARSON CTY, NV

Well today is the day the weather is supposed to change - heavy rains are forecast for tonight. That, coupled with the snow melt, had the Ranger at the park concerned enough to tell us that the river level is being closely monitored when we pulled in. It was not so much that the river would overflow its banks, it was more that the water table could rise in the park - there are already some large puddles and pooled water in various low spots. We decided to stay but be ready to leave in a hurry if needed.



We set up in site #2 then headed out to Starbucks just down the road for a coffee and to check email. Afterwards, we drove to the library. I had a few days of blog to catch up on.

We then drove over to Carson City and the Nevada Train Museum. You can press the BACK button now, cause the rest of this entry is all about trains.

The museum has two working steam locomotives - a narrow gauge 2-6-0 named "Glenbrook" and a standard gauge 4-4-0 named "Inyo". Both engines are brought out from display during the year; the Glenbrook moreso than the Inyo. The Inyo is only fired up on the July 4 weekend. They **are** two beautiful engines.



VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE No. 22
The Inyo aka Brass Betsy

The Inyo was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works at a cost to the Virginia & Truckee of \$100,000. It was completed in February 1875 and used to carry the following loads on the north-south route of Gold Hill. The V&T bought only one additional locomotive, named the "Columbian" before the Inyo, and in 1881 the owners began selling off remaining assets for locomotives. The Inyo and passenger car had long been in the hands of the Virginia & Truckee since the 13 locomotives left on the route by 1881. It was acquired in 1961 by the Nevada State Park System for \$100,000. It was restored to operating condition by the Nevada State Park System in 1985.

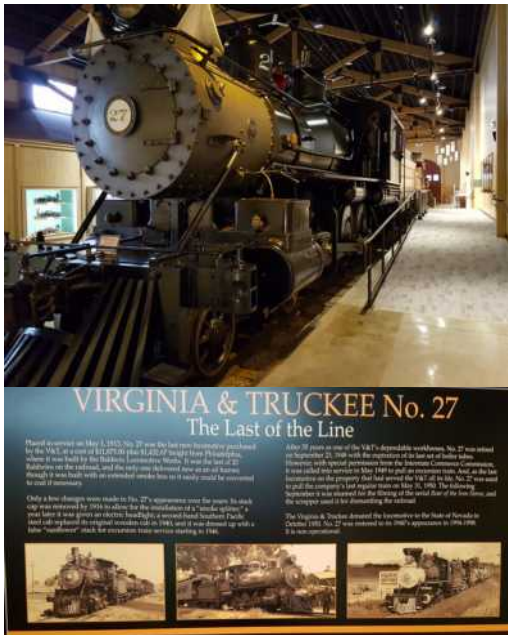
No. 22 is a 2-6-0 type, built by the V&T in 1875 when it was sold as Passenger No. 22. It was completed in February 1875 and used to carry the following loads on the north-south route of Gold Hill. The V&T bought only one additional locomotive, named the "Columbian" before the Inyo, and in 1881 the owners began selling off remaining assets for locomotives. The Inyo and passenger car had long been in the hands of the Virginia & Truckee since the 13 locomotives left on the route by 1881. It was acquired in 1961 by the Nevada State Park System for \$100,000. It was restored to operating condition by the Nevada State Park System in 1985.

In 1969 No. 22 participated in the Gold Spike Centennial in the name of the Central Pacific, and was displayed at the Gold Spike National Historic Site at Gold Springs, NV, and 1974, while at the Nevada State Park System. It was also displayed at the Nevada State Park System in 1985.

During 1985-86, No. 22 was restored to its 1875-1876 appearance, when it was at its best. The Inyo operated most days of July weekends, and has been featured at events and fairs at Las Vegas, Sacramento, and Washington, DC.



Also on display is the "last of the line", No 27; a small 0-4-2T Porter; and V&T passenger car #4.



Unfortunately floods earlier this year meant that the second building was not open to the public. The staff are still cleaning up the mess.

Even the McKeen passenger rail car was running a shortened trip around the museum property due to damage to the track because of the flood.

Here's a model of the McKeen.



When I came out of the museum it was raining. We drove back to camp in the rain which continued overnight.

We've decided to stay another day here in Dayton. Tomorrow, rain or shine, we are going to drive over to Tahoe.

MAY 7 - SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

The drive to South Lake Tahoe this morning was interesting. We left Carson City (4,400') and we started to climb, and climb, and climb some more. We crested Spooner summit at 7,146' and dropped down into South Lake Tahoe.



You can see the low cloud cover which really made everything look grey.

A short while later we arrived in downtown South Lake Tahoe which is, although we haven't been to Whistler for a few years, a more spread out version. Hotels, casinos, motels, B&Bs dotted the landscape. And people were everywhere. We couldn't help imagining what the place will look like in the summer.



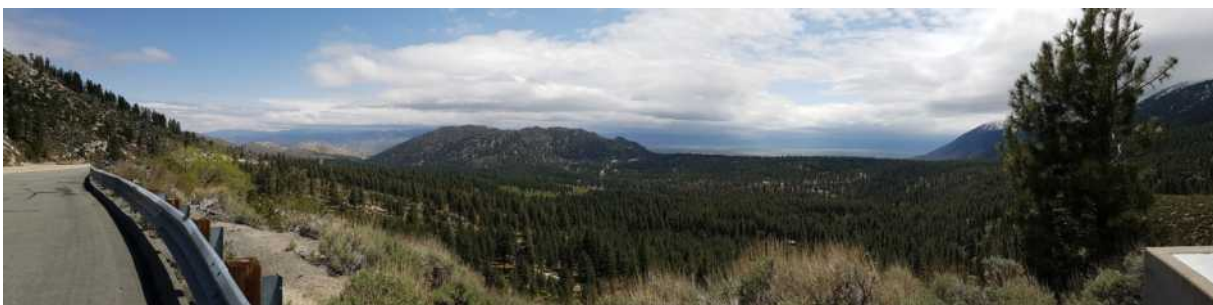
After turning around, we headed for a Starbucks we had seen on our way into town. There we met a most interesting couple - Loy Anne and Jerry were behind us in the lineup. Loy Anne turned around and "hit" me with her purse. She apologized profusely to which I answered "I thought I was being accosted and I was looking forward to it". We both laughed. We chatted in the lineup then with coffee in hand, Jen and I found the only table available - a table for 4. I motioned to Loy Anne and asked them to join us. Turns out these guys were just married - they are on their honeymoon, and unfortunately, last night, their hotel room was absolutely awful. They couldn't wait to leave this morning.

What a lovely couple. Jerry told his story about being drafted years ago. Pay for a PFC was \$26 a month, but if he wanted to join the paratroopers, he could triple his pay. So he did. Loy Anne worked as a flight attendant for American Airlines for 5 years, based out of NYC. We finished our coffees and the newlyweds headed off for breakfast. We wish them well; they were a lot of fun to be with for a few minutes in their new married life together.

As we left the Tahoe area, the weather began to improve.



Here we are heading back down the hill to the valley below.



On the way back from Tahoe we stopped at the Carson City library. The library in Dayton did not have the fastest wifi so I wanted to download a few movies if we want to watch one in the evening.

When we got back to camp, and after tea, we went for a walkabout. I found this explanation of the Pony Express very interesting. It lasted only 19 months!

The Pony Express

A Romantic Adventure in Business

- How long did it operate?
- Was it a profitable business?
- What ended the operation of the "pony"?
- The Pony Express, known as the "pony", traveled between where and where?



"Now she is to become the connecting link between the extremes of the continents. For the first time in the history of America, mail will go by an overland route from east to west."

Major M. Jeff Thompson, who later became a famous Confederate general, the day he initiated the Pony Express.

It lasted only 19 months, from April 1860 until October 1861, but the fascination with the Pony Express lives on. It took 80 experienced riders (paid \$25 per week), 500 horses and more than 190 stations to get the mail 2,000 miles between San Francisco and St. Joseph, Missouri.

The Pony Express was a fast, efficient organization with postage averaging \$1-\$5 but it was not a successful financial venture. During this same time period the trans-continental telegraph was being built. The telegraph was completed on October 24, 1862 and could send a message in minutes rather than weeks. It solved the communication needs that had created the Pony Express.



Mochila

Mail was carried in a mochila, a well-tailored leather vest that had four stiff leather boxes sewn to it and fit snugly over the saddle. Mail was wrapped in oiled silk and the pockets were locked for protection.



Mochila

The Telegraph meets the Pony

Four days after the completion of the transcontinental telegraph, on October 28, 1861, the colorful adventure that was the Pony Express ended.

The Rider's Oath

"While I am the employ of A. Majors, I agree not use profane language, not to get drunk, not to gamble, not to treat animals cruelly and not to do anything else that is incompatible with the conduct of a gentleman. And I agree, if I violate any of the above conditions, to accept my discharge without any pay for my services."



Tomorrow we head south on Hwy 97 towards Walker Lake, NV and some BLM lands. See you there!

MAY 8-? - WALKER LAKE BLM, NORTH OF HAWTHORNE, NV

We thought it was a good thing that we were heading out of Dayton State Park today as the large puddle of water at the entrance of the park is significantly larger this morning.

The sun was shining, the temperature was rising, time to go. But first a stop at Starbucks just up the way to check email.

Hwy 50 heads north, northeast towards Fallon. Along the way we noticed what appears to be a large "pile" of mine tailings. What do you think??



The desert scenery went on to the horizon.



And the Lahontan Reservoir.



As we pulled into Fallon, NV, the point at which we head south on Hwy 95, I noticed a Jiffy Lube. Alfie was almost spot on mileage-wise for some new oil, so we dropped the trailer and I drove a couple of hundred feet to Jiffy Lube. About ½ hour later we were on our way, looking for the Telegraph Coffee shop. Coffee, a scone for Jen, and a ham & cheese croissant pour moi (I forgot to have breakfast this morning) in the sunshine was absolutely delightful.

There's a Naval Air Station in Fallon. Probably the reason for this monument.



Back on the road, the desert landscape changed. Water canals along the side of the road meant some sort of farming to us.



Then, a real surprise. We had to slow for a construction zone - it looked like the crew were repairing a culvert under the highway. The water was flowing quite rapidly out of the culvert on our left side. The real surprise was on our right - the desert was flooded!!



Just look at all that water.

A short while later we pulled off at the first of 2 campgrounds on Walker Lake. This one was a little too primitive, so we continued south.

We continued on and accidentally drove past the next camp ground but it definitely looked like it had potential. We stopped at a pullout and turned around.





Sportsman's Beach is a beautiful location overlooking Walker Lake. Each site has a picnic table with a permanent cover over it.

We pulled into site 20, a couple of sites away from a motorhome. As we were setting up camp, Julie and Chips came out to greet us. They'd been lonely the night before so they said. We told them we were the trailer trash they were hoping to avoid. We chatted at length. Turns out, in 1999, they purchased a new Monaco Windsor (36') motor home and have been full-timing in it for 12 years!



We set up camp for the night thinking we would stay for a couple days. Daily fee here on BLM land is \$6!

Before tea this afternoon, we walked further up the road from our site - around the corner and what a surprise. There are still more sites and some really nice ones - looking right out at the lake (not that ours is that bad). So we decided we'll move in the morning to one of them and stay a few more days. I just have to go into Hawthorne, the next town south, and pick up some more drinking water.

We have cell service, so we can check our email. The forecast for the next week here is sunshine and warm temps, cool nights. Just perfect; we may stay forever.

Check with you later.

THE NEXT MORNING - MAY 9

We said goodbye to our neighbours this morning and moved to site 29. Of course I forgot to take a picture but it is a nicer, and more private, site than last night's - the road is behind us, not in front.

On my morning walk, I ventured down to the lake's edge - actually quite a drop down. I shot a video and decided to walk back to the boat launch ramp.



On the way back up a set of stairs to our level, I noticed a couple of "elevation" signs (this one is 1949). I will have to research the history of Walker Lake.

If it's any consolation, the town of Hawthorne, NV, where I am at the library, houses the US military's "Largest Ammo Dump in the World."

We've decided to stay a few days - the weather is forecast to be beautiful - sunny and warm/hot - and the camping fees are the right price.

See you in a few days.



MAY 11 - TOWARDS THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS

We awoke to another glorious sunny morning at Sportsman's Beach. We been at site #29 for the past 2 days but it is time to continue our journey south.

We decided that we might regret not heading back into California to wonder at its snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains. We're so close to the east entrance to Yosemite - there may be just a chance the road is open.

We stopped in Hawthorne to gas up and grab some brekkie. Then, we started our climb from Hawthorne (4,331') to the Anchorite Pass (7,626') and into California. Along the way the scenery continued to be desert.



As we climbed higher, trees began appearing.



Then, after our almost 3,300' climb, we had our first glimpse of the Sierra Nevadas. Pretty freakin' impressive!!



We managed to find a place to pull over so I could take this panoramic picture and video.



A few miles later we stopped at the Mono Basin Visitor Centre. This is also where we could ask about access to Yosemite. We looked around at the various displays then enjoyed a 20-minute film on Mono Lake and its tufa towers, both limestone and sand. See the links for more information.

This very large piece of Obsidian was outside the main entrance - pretty impressive - dark and black.



Here's a little bit of interesting information about Mono Lake.

Half a dozen little mountain brooks flow into Mono Lake, but not a stream of any kind flows out of it. It neither rises or falls, apparently, and what it does with its surplus water is a dark and bloody mystery." Mark Twain, 1872

Although Mono Lake has no outlet, about 45 vertical inches (115 cm) of water is lost each year to evaporation in this dry climate. Freshwater in-flow is critical to replace this loss and maintain a healthy ecosystem.

I took this picture from the deck overlooking the lake.

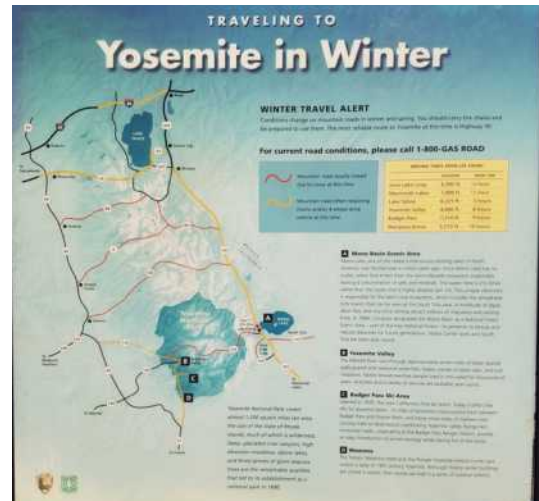


And this panoramic shot.



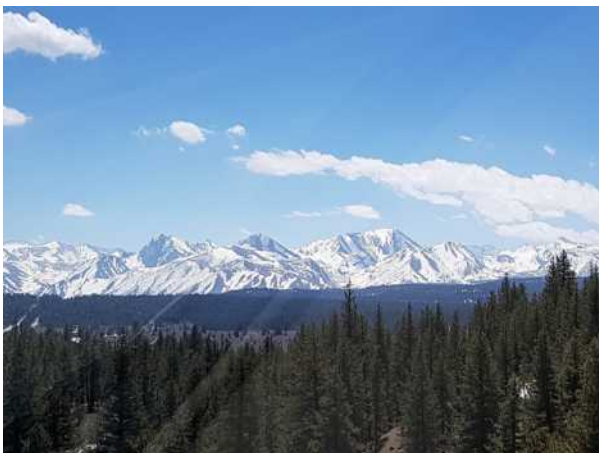
We did ask about Yosemite, but alas the road is still covered in snow. Interestingly, this time last year, everything was open.

Continuing our trek south on Hwy 395 we approached Deadman's Summit (8,041').



Mammoth Lakes is just a few miles off Hwy 395 - let's go take a look. Well, we stopped in at the Visitor Centre and found that really not much is open yet because of all the snow. The area had received 12" of new snow last week! Mammoth was very unimpressive - probably much nicer in the winter.

The scenery is spectacular but the pictures don't really do it justice.



Back on the main highway a short while later, we dropped down an 8 mile, 6% grade into Bishop, CA. Second gear, 50 mph, no brakes needed, in full control - attaboy Alfie!!

So from Hawthorne, NV (4,331') this morning, we climbed 3,710' and descended 3,891' to Bishop, CA (4,150').

We checked in at Highland RV park for the night. We need to charge the house batteries and replenish our water supply. Then we are good to go.



We quite enjoyed the last few days "boondocking". Two days at Dayton SP and 3 days at Sportsman's Beach were a real eye-opener. We didn't really miss the convenience of turning on the kettle - we did just fine with the old Coleman stove. We didn't really miss not having a hot shower, although it was nice to have one this afternoon (fortunately it had not been that hot for long periods - the nights were cool). A bag of ice in our cooler lasted 3 days.

So the only real reason we're plugged in tonight was to charge the batteries. If we had a solar setup, we could avoid the RV parks pretty much full-time - something we are seriously considering.

Here's our site (\$38) tonight.

Tomorrow we head to Tuttle Creek BLM just outside of Lone Pine, CA about 60 miles down the road.

See you there.



MAY 12 - THE DESERT IN BLOOM

Another day, another RV park. Well, not quite. The RV park had done its job - our batteries are fully charged and the water tank is full. Time to get back to nature and the BLM lands of Lone Pine, CA.

We enjoyed a leisurely drive south on Hwy 395 - a 4-lane highway. We stayed in the right lane and observed the 55 mph speed limit (CA law if towing).

The Sierra Nevada mountains are pretty impressive!



I wanted to take a panoramic picture so we stopped at a pullout that also had a little bit of local history.



A Misplaced Sidewalk

The idea of building a highway from Los Angeles to Lake Tahoe was very popular with the residents of Inyo and Mono Counties in the early 20th Century. However, the first section to be paved in the region, the 8.5-mile-long, single-lane concrete road behind this sign, was not popular with local residents, who regarded it as inadequate before it was even completed. A year advanced to the Page Register described the concrete strip as "a misplaced sidewalk," built across the notoriously rough section of the Owens Valley route. It proved to be impractical to pass through here without having to carry a shovel and broom.

The 8-foot-wide, 4-inch-thick strip of concrete on the west side of the highway here was part of the first highway paving project in Inyo County, and may represent one of the earliest uses of concrete pavement in California. Construction of this 10.25-mile-long section of road was authorized by the California Highway Commission on September 6, 1916, to replace the old gravel-dirt road that ran through the alternately rocky and sandy terrain.

Construction began the following April, but because of the remote location, limited facilities, and the fact that the road was built by the laborers who did not work during the cold winter and hot summer months, this section of highway was not completed until the spring of 1918. The cost was \$100,000, plus \$10,000 for engineering charges, to build this stretch of what was State Highway 20.

Pullouts were provided every 1/4 mile to allow early going to opposite directions to pass each other, but materials seldom ran there. Instead they needed to pass each other by driving with their right wheels off the road. One of these pullouts can be seen approximately 1/4 mile north of this sign.

Working on the Road - 1919

Prior to 1919, state road work in this region was done by the laborers Arthur Olson constructed. They typically lived in tent camps and slept on cots. Below are the road construction jobs of the time and labor. These jobs paid. Employees made from \$20 to \$100 a week. One dollar a day was deducted for meals and board.

Track Driver	\$4.00 per day
Laborer	\$3.75 to \$4.00 per day
Concrete Laborer	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Tycoon	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Flaxer	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Barman	\$3.00 per week plus board
Driver	\$4.00 per day
Millwright	\$4.25 to \$4.50 per day
Blacksmith	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Blacksmith Helper	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Powerman	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Carpenter	\$4.25 per day
Plum Tinker	\$4.00 per day
Painter	\$4.00 per day
Mechanic	\$4.25 to \$4.50 per day
Blacksmith	\$4.00 to \$4.25 per day
Stove expert	\$4.00 per day plus board

Highway Construction Changes in Technology, Changes in Business

The first roads here were hand-engineered and built by locally hired workers using hand-crafted equipment and hand labor. They were built for local transport and not part of a regional or statewide highway system. The need for a state highway system emerged with both the rapid growth of California and the beginning of the automobile era. In response to the need for a state highway system the California Highway Commission (CHC) was formed. The CHC proposed and surveyed routes, and coordinated local road building efforts where possible. State highway construction began in earnest in the 1910s and early 1920s.

Technology and business practices changed rapidly during the initial phase of state highway construction. As the state of World War I the state acquired a host of highway survey tools and heavy equipment that was adapted for road work. Highway construction became more business.

Local highway work began going up & construction by 1920. The Eastern Shasta was the last region of California to see private contractors build state highway construction. Contractors typically advanced the technology of road building. Highway design and construction is now a high-tech business using computer-aided design, laser leveling systems, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and laser-guided equipment. Under all major highway construction and maintenance projects are conducted by private contractors.

We continued our drive south and a short while later reached Lone Pine, CA.

Not sure of exactly how to get to the campground, we stopped at the local grocery store where I bought some ice. I asked the clerk for directions and she kindly told me where to go.



We found a nice site and set up. I saw a bit of water so I walked to the back of our site and shot the video of Tuttle Creek.



Okay, it's just after 11 a.m., so it is definitely coffee time. We hopped into Alfie and headed back to Lone Pine. The drive down was interesting - I had no idea we had climbed so far.

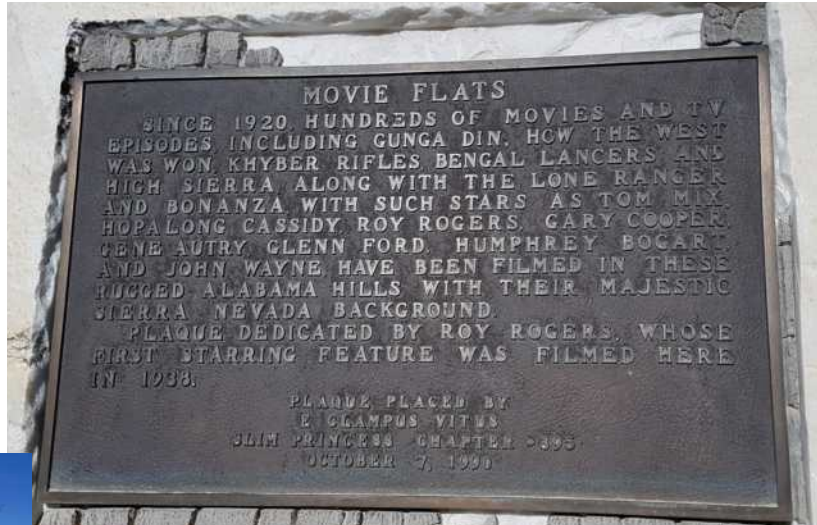
At the local Lone Star Bistro, while we enjoyed a nice cup of coffee and a muffin, I checked the internet for the elevations. In 6 miles, we had climbed 1,393' to the campground! No wonder Alfie was a little slow going up!

As we walked to the grocery store, we found this plaque.

Afterwards, we headed back up to the campground. On the way we passed this sign.



We continued climbing then saw this plaque on the side of the road.



I suggested to Jen that we should check out the Lone Pine campground further up.



Lone Pine c/g is at 6,000', about 800' higher than where we are.

We turned around at the campground entrance and saw this view.

From the main highway, we turned onto the road that leads to Tuttle Creek campground.



The paved road into the campground is quite long. Along the way we saw this - the desert in bloom.



Isn't Mother Nature marvellous?!

On the other side of the road...



We're here for 2 nights if the wind doesn't blow us away. It's blowing hard at times again today. In the shade it is very comfortable. I imagine if the wind stopped, the heat might be quite oppressive.

Just heading back from an afternoon walk. By the way, the camera lies....the mountains are very close.



That's all for today.

MAY 13 - MOVIE ROAD IN THE ALABAMA HILLS

Jen awoke early this morning and took this great picture of the moon over the Sierra Nevadas.



Our plan for this morning is to drive along Movie Road on the way into Lone Pine. Hundreds of films have used the Alabama Hills as their backdrop - should be fun - let's go!

Here's the turnoff.



After a couple of hundred feet of tarmac, we were looking at a gravel surface.



Oh well, we can't come this far and not do it! These rocks formations are really interesting.



The map we had showed mile markers and information about various films shot in various locations in these hills. Do you think we saw anything along the way? Nope! There was absolutely nothing as we twisted and turned, drove up and down dale for about 10 miles on a dusty, washboard gravel road. We were very happy to see the valley and eventually Hwy 395 in the distance.



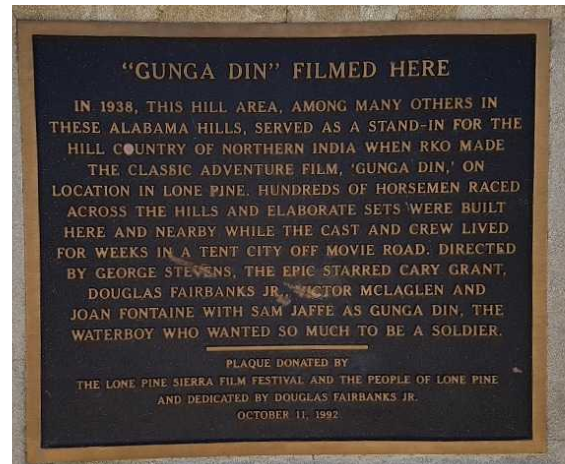
We headed down the highway, through Lone Pine to the Tourist Info Centre on the other side of town. We wanted to get some information about Death Valley - tomorrow's destination. In the courtyard at the front of the building were some flowering trees. The burgundy-flowered tree is a Desert Willow - very pretty. I don't know what the other one is called.



We drove back into town and enjoyed coffee at the Lone Star Bistro.



After coffee, we stopped at a roadside marker we had driven past yesterday. It's on the road to the campground.



After seeing this monument, we wondered why there weren't similar monuments on Movie Road. Perhaps there are, but we didn't see anything as I mentioned earlier.

Back at camp, I noticed Tuttle Creek was a little more active than it was yesterday.



We have seen these purple flowers scattered throughout the desert. Today on my walk, I saw that they must be of the lupin family - a desert variety no doubt.

After tea this afternoon we walked up the campground road to the top and took this picture of Owens Lake. There is quite a history around this lake. More about that in tomorrow's entry.



See you in Death Valley!

MAY 14 - TO AND THROUGH DEATH VALLEY, CA

How can I describe the drive today? Exciting? We'll see.

We left Tuttle Creek campground early this morning and turned Alfie east towards Death Valley. At the Visitor's Centre yesterday, on display was a relief model of the area that clearly indicated two mountain ranges in front of Death Valley. On the model, they seemed reasonable. In real life, considerably higher!

We drove past Owens Lake. Many years ago this lake's water was diverted to serve the Los Angeles area. When the lake dried up, the dust caused considerable problems. Long story short, the city of LA finally admitted responsibility and now irrigates a lot of the remaining lake bed so that dust cannot be a problem again.

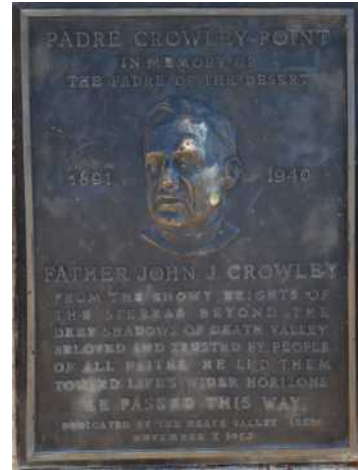


On the way we passed many of what looked like stunted palm trees. There they were just standing out there in the desert. Turns out they are Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*).

We drove into Death Valley National Park and continued our climb.



We climbed to the Father Crowley Vista Point at 4,247' and pulled into the parking area.



Then began the first descent into Panamint Springs, 2,336' lower down the mountain, where we stopped for coffee.



Looking out from our comfortable chairs outside the General Store, we saw where we were headed. Tell me this is not where we are going!



Too bad, it is!

After cresting Towne Pass (4,956'),



we began a 12-mile descent: the first 5 miles were at 8%. We made a pit stop at Emigrant,



followed by a 5-mile, 6% descent then a 2-mile, 4% grade. Today has certainly been a day of ups and downs!

By lunchtime, we arrived at Stovepipe Wells at SEA level!

We decided we both deserved suitable refreshment. I had an Arrogant Bastard and Jen had a Downtown Brown with our lunches.



Death Valley Lodging Company	
CA Highway 190	
Death Valley, CA 92328	
(760) 786-2367	
deathvalleylodgingco.com	
Emp: 5766-Joe B	Clk #: 29
05/14/2017	Table: P4
01:13 PM	Guests: 2
1 ARROGANT BASTARD	6.00
1 DOWNTOWN BROWN	5.50
1 PRICKLY PEAR HOUSE SALAD	6.50
1 SIDE OF GRILLED CHICKEN	4.00
1 CHILI-CHEDDAR FRIES	7.95



Twenty-five miles later we pulled into Furnace Creek (elevation: **-190'**). We checked out the campground but were not impressed. Almost all of the sites were in the blazing 36C sunshine. Unserviced sites are \$16 while full hookups are \$31. It was still very windy so we decided to keep on trucking.



We climbed out of Death Valley - I think we got to about 3,000' then we descended into Death Valley Junction (2,041').



We turned south heading for Shoshone. We were getting low on gas and we knew there was a gas station there. As we drove into town, we passed the Shoshone RV Park. Hey, there are trees! We gassed up and headed back to the RV park for the night.

Tomorrow we head towards Laughlin, NV. See you there.

MAY 15 - ALIENS, JOSHUA TREE HWY, & INTO ARIZONA

Today is a travel day. We enjoyed our brief visit to the hamlet of Shoshone, CA but it is time to start making our way towards the Grand Canyon.

We left Shoshone (1,580') and almost immediately began climbing to the Ibex Pass at 2,072'.



The descent into Baker was equally interesting. It's just amazing the changes in the topography here in the desert!



At Baker, we turned onto the I-15 along with all the other traffic going to Las Vegas.

Turning off at our exit we were flabbergasted to see what appeared to be a solar farm. I just had to stop and take a couple of pictures. Turns out it is the largest solar thermal power plant in the world! It was eerie - awe inspiring, almost out of this world. It made me think of the 5 note music sequence in the 1977 movie "Close Encounters."



Our route took us on the aptly named Joshua Tree Highway. We just had to stop and check these out.



Each of those leaves ends in a very sharp spike - not to be messed with!

There's still lots of cacti almost ready to bloom in the desert.

A short while later we descended into Laughlin, NV. How can you tell it's Nevada?! Pictures taken from Bullhead City, AZ across the Colorado River from Laughlin.

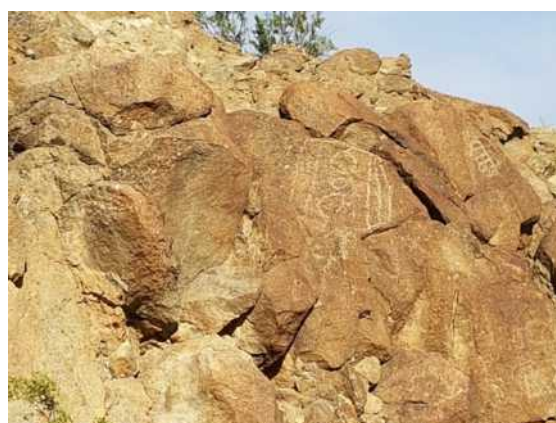


No...that's a casino built in the shape of a paddlewheeler!

We drove by Davis Camp, a city park, that looked interesting so we pulled in for the night. A very nice site right on the river.



On our evening walk, we came across these petroglyphs. Very interesting.





Tomorrow we head further east. We're going to start the day in Kingman, AZ and drive the historic Route 66 for a while.

See you then.

MAY 16 - KINGMAN, AZ & HISTORIC ROUTE 66

Before we left this morning, I snapped this photo. Notice the orange floats that were in the water yesterday are now resting on the bottom. Damn the dam, eh?!

We headed east, climbing up to Union Pass (3,571') and then Coyote Pass (3,737') before dropping into Kingman, AZ. Here are some pictures of the ever-changing topography.



We arrived in Kingman, AZ to the sound of trains - two BNSF container trains passing each other.



We dropped into the Visitor's Centre and came away loaded with all sorts of information on the Historic Route 66.



How's this for precise measurement - on the front entrance to the Visitor's Centre?!



The weather was lovely so we decided to walk to the Beale Street café for morning coffee. It was a bit more of a hike than we anticipated, so after coffee, I walked back to the rig and returned to get Jen. On my way back to the rig, I snapped these few pictures: Kingman train station, the Hotel Beale (air cooled no less), the Old Trails Garage (note the auto names) and Dream Machines.



(I see a '55 Chev 2-door BelAir hardtop, a roadster, a Lincoln or perhaps a Mercury, a '70s Mustang, a '57 Chev 2-door hardtop, and a late model Mercedes. If only.....)

After picking up Jen, we drove up the hill from the lovely "old town" Kingman into the mass of humanity that is Kingman, AZ today. Gawd, it was wall to wall cars, shops everywhere. We did a Wallymart run and then got onto Route 66 heading for Peach Springs and points east.

A lot of Route 66 was replaced by I-40 but this section survived although I cannot say the same for some of the business along this historic route. Nevertheless it was fun to drive along a section of this historic highway of yesteryear.



All too soon we arrived at the end of this section of Route 66 and Seligman, AZ (5,520'). Up the on ramp, we got onto I-40 heading towards Williams, AZ (6,765').

We decided that instead of driving up to the Grand Canyon, we would take the train that runs from Williams to the Grand Canyon, so when we got to Williams, I went to the train station to get tickets. Tomorrow is going to be an exciting day if the weather holds - rain is forecast for the afternoon.



See you at the Grand Canyon.

MAY 17 - THE GRAND CANYON

Today's entry is going to be fairly short. There is really no way to adequately describe the Grand Canyon, other to experience it yourself.

Having said that here are a few pictures of our trip north from Williams, AZ to the Grand Canyon.

The train ride, complete with entertainment and the ever-changing landscape.



THE GRAND CANYON



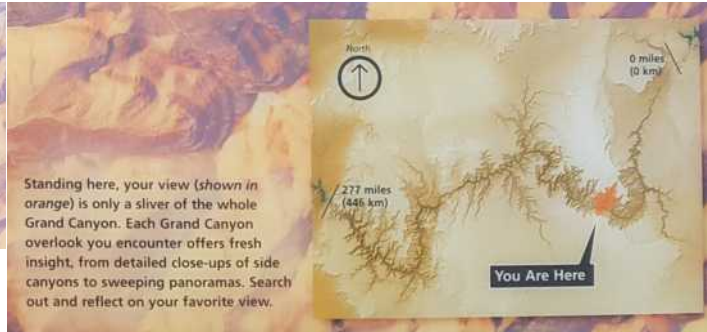
Colorful Testimony

Grand Canyon affirms the carving power of the Colorado River by the many colorful rock layers the river exposed. The various colors and textures of the canyon's cliffs and slopes reveal changing environments, extending back nearly two billion years. After studying these layers, geologists grouped them into three sets. Each set testifies to a different facet of Grand Canyon's evolution.

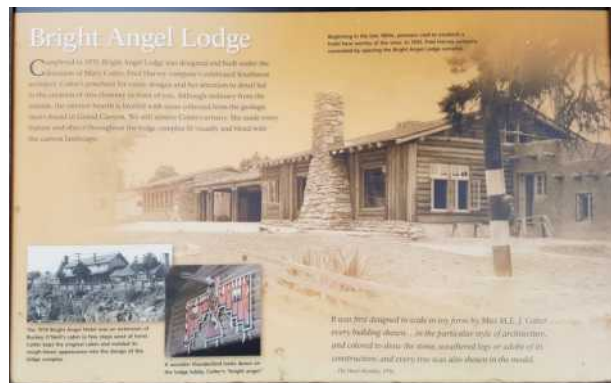


Edge of Vastness

Gazing upon this view, one is struck by the canyon's vastness. The mind struggles to comprehend it. Try to describe the canyon's size in words. Try to measure in your mind the canyon's depth, width, and length. Measurements like 1 mile (1.6 km) deep, 18 miles (29 km) wide, and 277 river miles (446 km) long leave us scratching our heads. Perhaps the best we can do is just feel the canyon's enormity. Measure yourself up against it. We are minuscule in comparison, but still, through the keen receptivity of our senses, we can appreciate Grand Canyon's immensity.



Some of the buildings.





And finally...

It was a very long day for Jen as she decided not to take her wheelchair to the canyon. This meant she walked everywhere. As a result we are staying another night in Williams just to recharge and relax.

We head to Flagstaff area Friday. See you there.



MAY 19 - WINTER CAMPING & SEDONA, AZ

Surprise, surprise... 1½" of snow last night in Williams. I thought we were done with winter camping, but I guess not. I think 6,700+ feet of elevation might have something to do with this white stuff.



Today we travel east a short distance towards Flagstaff on I-40 then turn south to Sedona. This interstate is in very poor shape in some areas. Trying to avoid the potholes and rough spots was very tiring. The rig definitely took a beating this morning.

Sedona was recommended by the Tourist Centre in Kingman - "Monument Valley on steroids" so we just had to come and check it out. It did not disappoint.

Heading south from Flagstaff, we dropped about 3,400' into Sedona. The drive down through the canyon was twisty to say the least. Parts of the road surface were in atrocious condition. If I were a local, I'd be wondering where my gas tax money was going!

Unfortunately while the scenery was awe-inspiring, the pictures just look like more of the same, so here are some of the more interesting ones to give you an idea of the area.





The first appearance of humanity was Uptown Sedona. We stopped at the tourist centre to inquire about campsites, etc. Turned out the one RV park in town was full.



We passed through West Sedona and its myriad of Safeways, Staples, and other stores. Not someplace we want to spend any amount of time. However, Uptown might have been fun to explore, but we need to find a site for the night.

We headed to Dead Horse Ranch State Park in Cottonwood, about 20 miles south. The "Campground Full" sign was displayed but I asked at the booth anyway. Turned out that one of the handicap sites had just become available, so off we went. (Many State Parks have handicap sites they keep open for handicap campers. At a certain point, if the site has not been reserved or occupied, it's open to all campers. We arrived just at the right time!)



It's nice to be back in the lower elevations. I don't think it will snow tonight - the temperature this afternoon was 28C with a lovely cool breeze. I could get used to this!

Tomorrow we continue our trip south to Camp Verde on the Verde River, before we turn north and head back towards Flagstaff.

MAY 20 - "TAKE IT EASY", WINSLOW, AZ

Saturday morning and it's time to hit the road.

After a stop at Starbucks to check email, we're heading south to Camp Verde then north a short distance to view Montezuma Castle National Monument. The southern Sinagua farmers built this 5-story, 20-room dwelling sometime between 1100 and 1300. It occupies a cliff recess 100' above the valley. Early American settlers marveled at the structure. They assumed that it was Aztec in origin, hence the name Montezuma Castle.



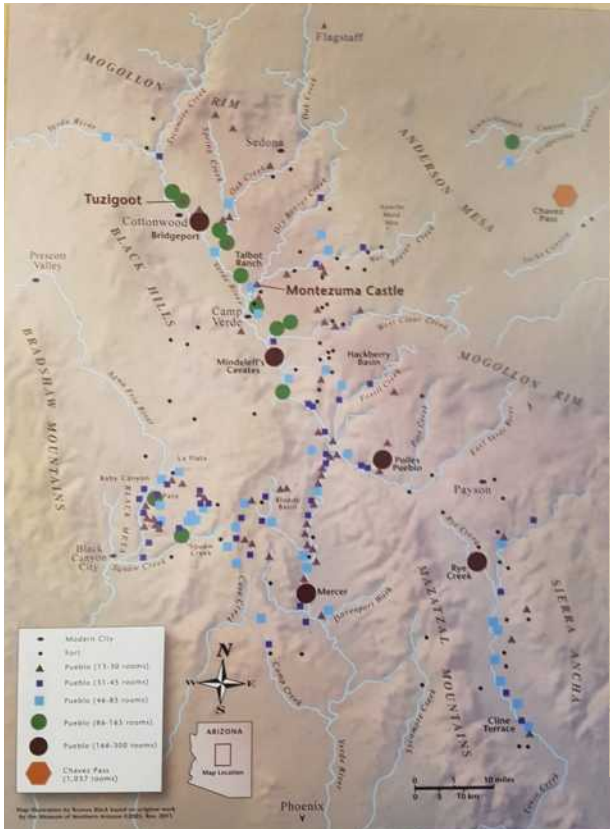
On the Move

Around 1400, after centuries of settlement here, families began leaving their Verde Valley homes.

The archeological record suggests that from 1350 to 1400, people began to leave the valley and join larger pueblos to the north and east. They did not disappear, but may have left for a variety of reasons. What was it like to leave behind homes their families had occupied for generations?

What caused them to depart this well-watered, bountiful valley? Disease, conflict, depleted soils, and changing, unpredictable weather patterns are all possibilities. Also, trade networks that had been in place for many centuries appear to stop around this time, cutting off important social, cultural, and economic contacts. Perhaps there was

the prospect of a better life in another place. Hopi say their ancestors purposefully settled and left villages like Montezuma Castle for a reason, one that involves fulfillment of a spiritual covenant.



Surrounded by Neighbors

Though Montezuma Castle may seem remote, by 1300 it was part of a complex network of at least 40 Verde Valley villages. Between 6,000 and 8,000 people may have lived in the valley and its surrounding uplands.

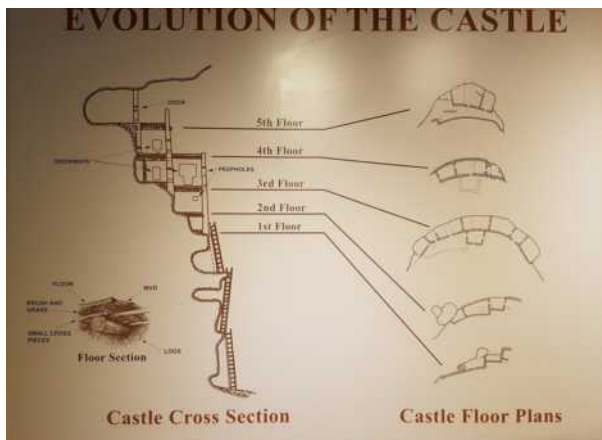
Many Hopi people say Montezuma Castle and the numerous other villages in the valley were built and occupied by clans migrating in waves from the south. The villages here were springboards to settlements further north, and ultimately to villages on the Hopi Mesas. In their view, the Verde Valley was simply a temporary stop in a larger journey, and not the final destination for these people.

Here's an artistic depiction of one of the rooms.

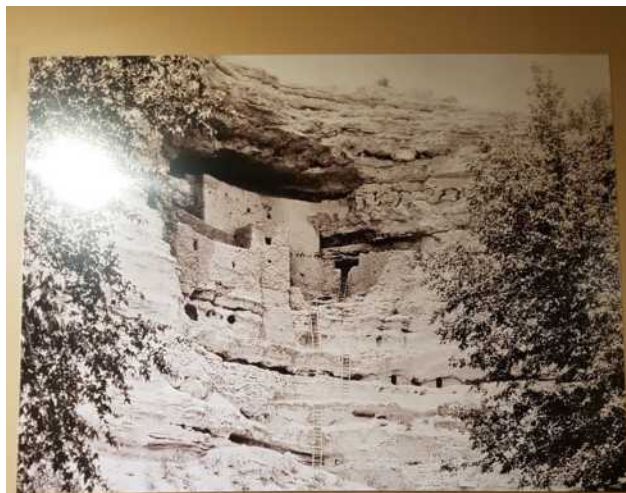


THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The Sinagua farmers did not disappear. Their descendants still remain among the Hopi, Zuni, and other Puebloan groups. The Yavapai also share a connection with the Castle's inhabitants. O'odham peoples of southern Arizona tell us their ancestors traded with the Verde Valley people. Modern cultural connections to Montezuma Castle are rich and complex.



Here's an graphic illustration of the castle. Can you picture yourself climbing up those ladders? How about climbing down?!



It was hard to imagine that this structure has been here for so many centuries. Impressive!

Montezuma Castle, the most visible building complex of the Sinagua in this area, was constructed in phases. The people added to it gradually – perhaps from the 1130s to the early 1400s. At its greatest development the structure included portals and "viewing slots." Some passageways in the walls and ceilings were opened or closed indicating that home improvements may have been done during the overall building process.

Back on the road, we headed south back towards Camp Verde. There, we turned east on Hwy 260 for a while, then north on Hwy 87 towards Winslow, AZ. From Camp Verde (3,160') we climbed. We stopped for a break at Blue Ridge - the library building had some picnic tables outside - perfect!

We continued our climb through West and East Sunset Mesas to over 6,000'. You can see the mesas in the distance.



Then we dropped down to 4,850' and Winslow, AZ.



I knew there was a reason I wanted to drive to Winslow (other than the fact the only other way to get here is on Interstate highways). Do you remember the song "Take It Easy" by The Eagles? Be sure to click the link to hear this famous song.

Yup, after a visit to the tourist centre, we headed to "the corner."



We then drove along Route 66 to the east side of Winslow to view two pieces of the wreckage of the WTC from the 9-11 terrorist attacks. Very moving to see, and touch, these pieces and the actual flag which flew outside of the Pentagon on that fateful day!



REMEMBRANCE GARDEN
THESE TWO STEEL BEAMS FROM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER
ENTRUSTED TO THE CITIZENS OF WINSLOW
BY THE CITY OF NEW YORK,
ALONG WITH THIS FLAG THAT WAS FLOWN AT THE PENTAGON;
STAND AS THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR REMEMBRANCE GARDEN.
THE WORDS "UNITED WE STAND" REMIND THE WORLD
THAT WE WILL NOT FEAR TERRORISM.
WE HEREBY DEDICATE THIS GARDEN TO NORTHERN ARIZONA'S
PROMISE THAT
"WE WILL NEVER FORGET"



Okay, time to head towards the Meteor Crater, about 20 miles west. We've booked into the RV park there for a couple of nights. So tomorrow we'll drive 6 miles to view the crater. Looking forward to that!

More later.

MAY 21 - "OUT OF THIS WORLD" - METEOR CRATER, AZ

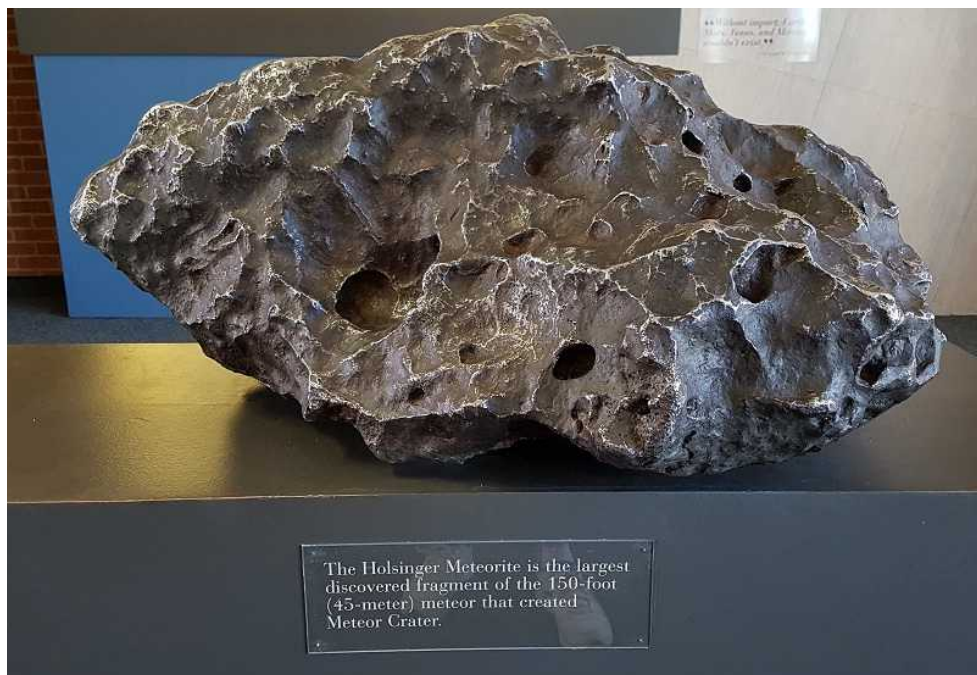
Six miles down the road outside the RV park is Meteor Crater, one of the best preserved meteor impact craters in the world. We are off to see this out-of-this-world site today.

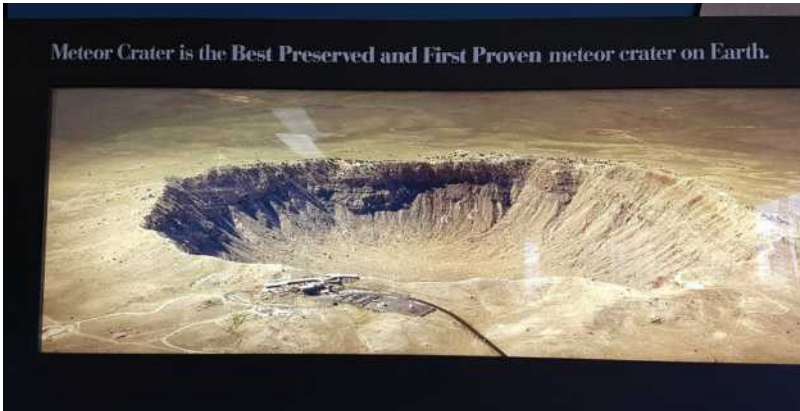
We don't drive too far before we see what looks like the profile of a crater in the distance.



We parked Alfie and wandered into the facility. Elevators made it easy to get to the various levels. Almost the first thing you see when you've paid your admission fee is this meteorite fragment.

You can take a look at the link to get the full story of the crater and Daniel Barringer's search for the meteorite itself. Although no meteorite fragments have been found within the crater, this fragment was found a couple of miles away towards Diablo Canyon.





Meteor Crater was formed when a meteor slammed into the Earth. Though dramatic, this event is far from unusual—collisions and impacts involving meteors and comets have been critical to the formation and development of Earth and the entire solar system.

Today, Meteor Crater appears much as it did when it was formed nearly 50,000 years ago. It remains the world's **Best Preserved and First Proven** example of a large impact crater, and a valuable laboratory for research into the origins and evolution of our solar system.

“Without impact, Earth, Mars, Venus, and Mercury wouldn't exist.”
—Dr. Eugene Shoemaker

IMPACT FACTS

- The meteor that created Meteor Crater was traveling about 40,000 miles per hour (64,000 kilometers per hour), or more than 11 miles per second (18 kilometers per second).
- The meteor that created Meteor Crater was about 150 feet (45 meters) in diameter.

CRATER FACTS

- Meteor Crater is more than 4,000 feet (1,200 meters) across, about three-quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometers).
- At the time of impact, Meteor Crater was about 700 feet (210 meters) deep, and could have engulfed a 60-story building. Due to erosion of the rim and walls of the crater, the crater today is 550 feet (165 meters) deep.
- Twenty football games on 20 football fields could be played at the same time on the floor of Meteor Crater, while two million spectators watched from its rocky slopes!

The facility houses a theatre, museum, gift shop, etc. Pretty much the first thing we did was watch the 10-minute film. This was excellent; the graphics were superb. It gave you an extremely vivid explanation of the creation of the crater - it took all of 10 seconds!

We then toured the museum displays. I especially liked the one that "transported" me to the bottom of the crater.



After climbing back to the rim of the crater, I walked to the top lookout area and took this panoramic shot. You can see the buildings on the right as well as the mid-level viewing platform.



The topography around the crater is...well, uh, ...pretty flat.



I caught up with Jen and we walked down to the viewing platform about mid-level. Telescopes there made it easy to see the various features of the crater. By the way, this is where the original astronauts trained for their moon missions back in the '60s!

After we returned to the main level, I went down to the lowest level and took this picture. You can see the mid-level viewing platform to the left.



Okay, seems it's about time for a coffee and there's a Subway restaurant on site.

The sun was shining and there was a bit of shade at the American Astronaut Wall. Here all the names of the various Americans who have ventured into space are listed along with the "mission(s)" they undertook. A number of astronauts flew in space 7 times!

We chatted with other visitors to the crater as we enjoyed our coffee and chocolate-chip cookie. I answered a question about the train ride to the Grand Canyon to a couple of people. They left and we struck up a conversation with a gentleman from Nampa, ID. We must have chatted for close to an hour. We avoided, until the end, any discussion of politics.

Dwight is a member of the Church of the Nazarene. He's in Winslow helping rebuild a church there. Over the years, he's been to many places helping out. It reminded me of when I went out with my old chum, Colin, a couple of years ago to do a similar thing - help out. Anyway, after saying our goodbyes, I bumped into Dwight again and he said he'd like to take a picture. Yes, indeed! Jen and I really enjoyed meeting Dwight. What a very nice man!

Here we are in front of the "picture window."



Tomorrow we head into Flagstaff to visit the library. We also have to find a campsite for a day or two. The US long weekend is this coming weekend, so we are also trying figure out where we might be to ensure we have a campsite reserved for the weekend. Or else it might be Walmart, etc. for a few days.

Catch ya later!

MAY 22 - GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Before you think we've just got religion, let me tell you this story:

We were having tea outside the rig yesterday afternoon at Meteor Crater RV Park. I looked at the rear right trailer tire and noticed a nail head. Had the tire been in any other position, I wouldn't have seen it. Our tire monitor system did not indicate a leak, but just in case I looked up a tire shop - Discount Tire - in Flagstaff. We drove into Flagstaff this morning, but of course the GPS had no idea of where the tire shop was. I knew it was on Hwy 89 east of Flagstaff.

Well, we didn't find it, so we gave up and continued onto Flagstaff. Along the way we saw a Goodyear Tire store. A quick right turn and we drove by but there was no place to park, etc. so we continued on into Flagstaff.

Then I saw Hurst Tire with a great place to park the rig. I went inside to ask for assistance. The counter staff were extremely helpful. A mechanic came out, sprayed the nail head and just started to ease it out - oops, bubbles!

While we were waiting for the tire to be repaired, we began chatting with a fellow (and his Husky, Kenai) on his way home to Oklahoma City. It turned out he'd visited Antelope Canyon a couple of days ago. I told him I tried to book online but all tours were booked solid (Upper canyon - I never did see anything about the other, Lower canyon).

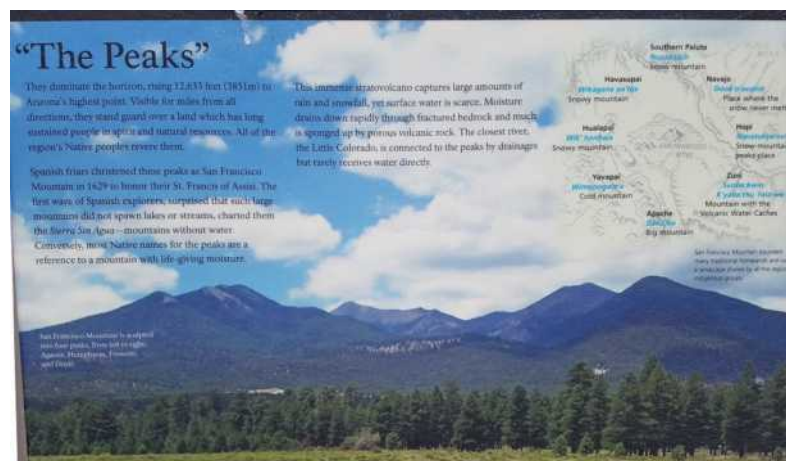
He gave me the name of a tour outfit for the lower canyon (you have to book a tour; you can't just wander in by yourself) and guess what? I'm going Thursday morning!

So if I hadn't noticed the nail in the tire, not found Discount Tire, couldn't get into Goodyear Tire, found Hurst Tire shop, and struck up a conversation, we would have missed Antelope Canyon!

Thank you, Jesus!!

We continued on to the Info Centre in downtown historic Flagstaff for information about camping in and around the area. Afterwards, we headed up Hwy 89, towards the Grand Canyon, and turned into the Bonito campground run by the National Forest Service (NFS).

On the way in we stopped at a wayside to look at the views.



The Grand Canyon was absolutely spectacular (it didn't hurt that it was sunny today, unlike our previous cloudy-day visit on the train). The views were close to 180° at Desert View - it was incredible. We just couldn't take it all in. I took numerous pictures and shot a video.



I left Jen devouring the views and wandered over to the Watchtower.



This structure is decorated in native art on each level inside.



From the upper level I took a few pictures out the windows.



On the viewing deck of the Watchtower is a plaque and information board.



All too soon we had to leave the Grand Canyon and get back on the road to Page, AZ. As I mentioned earlier, we stopped at the Little Colorado River Gorge. The steep, vertical sides of this canyon are really impressive.



But apparently, the "natives" here are a little more aggressive.



After a short visit, we continued our journey to Page. The scenery changed dramatically almost every time we turned a "corner".



We arrived in Page, AZ (4,300') very early in the afternoon. The sun was shining and the temperature was 92°F. Both RV parks/campgrounds were full so we headed for Walmart along with many others. Tomorrow morning, I am booked on a tour of Antelope Canyon. That should be interesting. I'll see you there.

MAY 25 - ANTELOPE CANYON, PAGE AZ

After a comfortable but warm night in the Walmart parking lot in Page, we awoke early. We wanted to go to Horseshoe Bend just south of Page before my tour of Antelope Canyon at 10:30.

The signboard at Horseshoe Bend indicated a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk to the viewpoint. Jen and I walked up the hill, surveyed the landscape, and decided to "borrow" a picture from the 'net. Jen couldn't have made the distance and I didn't want possibly screw up my Antelope Canyon tour.



Because we had time, we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at Denny's in Page. Afterwards, we stopped at a scenic view point to view the Glen Canyon dam and down river.



The layers in the rocks were quite incredible. It made me realize how fantastic Mother Nature is...how many eons it took to make what I was walking over this morning.



I rejoined Jen who informed me that the wind moving over the layers in the rock were making "pan flute" sounds. "Listen", she said. I heard the pan flute sound, then looked at her cane which has holes in the metal tube so that you can adjust the length of the cane. Holding it just right against the wind made the flute sounds. Nice try, Jen!

We drove to the tour company location about 6 miles east of Page. Wow, crowds of people already and it's only 8:30! I checked in and was able to get on the 9:10 tour.

Our group walked down to the starting point at the bottom of the canyon. The sun was shining and it was starting to get very warm. Fortunately there was a covered waiting area. You can see the line waiting to descend into the canyon - 5 ladders to get to the bottom!



So now my problem is how to describe this natural wonder. Well, I can't. Just like the Grand Canyon you will have to come and walk through it yourself. But in the meantime, here are some of the pictures that I and our tour guide took. I hope these excite you enough for you to put Antelope Canyon on your list.

The canyon is very narrow in spots.



All of this is the result of water and wind erosion over millennia. Just look at the colours.



This picture "Twin Peaks" was take by our tour guide. He knelt down on the floor of the canyon and shot the picture straight up. He did it for all eleven of us.



Here's another.



And my favourite "Rocky Mountain Sunset".



Well, as Bugs Bunny used to say at the end of a cartoon: "That's All, Folks".

We exited the canyon (yep, that narrow little trench) and walked back to our starting point. The entire took about 1.5 hours. Was it worth the price of admission? ABSOLUTELY!!



Around 10:30 (my original starting time), we hit the road, drove across the Glen Canyon dam bridge and headed for Kanab, UT. We're at an RV park there for 3 nights.



Tomorrow, we are going to drive to Bryce Canyon. Saturday will be Zion National Park. Sunday we will pull out and head for Cedar City, UT. See you there.

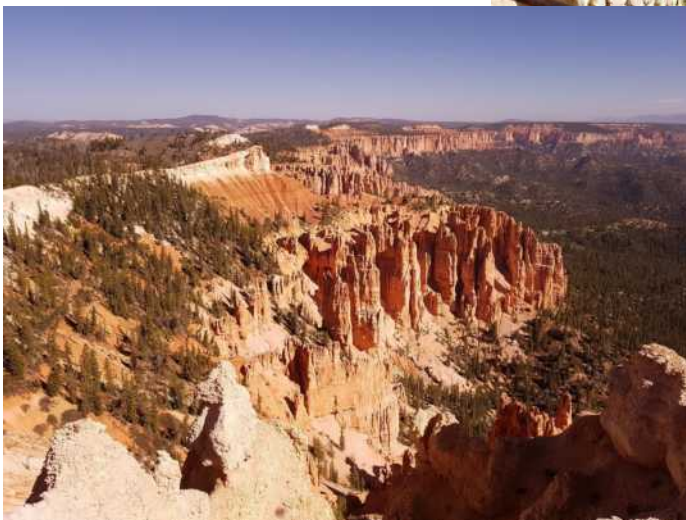
MAY 26 - BRYCE CANYON

On the way to Bryce Canyon this morning we drove through Red Canyon and a couple of "tunnels" cut through the red rock. Pretty impressive.

A short while later we entered the park.




One of the nice things about this National Park is that you can drive its entire length, or take the shuttle bus. As it's 18 miles to Rainbow Point, we decided to drive there then stop on our way back at the various view points.



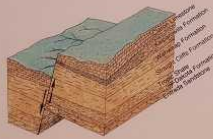
The Geology of Bryce Canyon

Bryce Canyon National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior


Once A Lake
About 60 million years ago, a large freshwater lake began to fill the low basin that covered most of southern Utah. Over a period of millions of years, rivers and streams from surrounding mountains gradually filled this lake with clays, silts and sands. Calcium carbonate cemented these sediments together, forming the limestone layer from which Bryce Canyon has been carved.




A Period Of Uplift
About 16 million years ago the land in southern Utah began to rise. A series of plateaus were uplifted along large cracks in the earth's crust called faults. The Panguisungut Plateau, on which you are standing, rose from near sea level to 8,900 feet (2,440 m). To the east, the Aquarius Plateau moved 2,000 feet (610 m) higher than the Panguisungut Plateau.



Erosion By Water
Even as the plateaus rose, erosion began to wear them away. The Paria River, a tributary of the Colorado River, began cutting northward into the landscape. Gradually, through a process known as headward erosion, it carved out a broad valley between the Aquarius and Panguisungut Plateaus. As erosion continues, the softer limestone on the eastern edge of the Panguisungut Plateau is washed away, leaving the many colored pinnacles, or hoodoos, of Bryce Canyon.





The Colors
The range of color in the limestone layers at Bryce Canyon seems almost endless. Yet limestone in its pure state is basically white in color. Small amounts of iron deposited with the limestone have oxidized, or rusted, to produce the yellows, oranges, reds and browns. Manganese oxides cause the blue and purple hues. Constantly changing weather and light conditions also add variety to the canyon's colors.

The Geology of Bryce Canyon

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Weathering and Erosion: Nature's Relentless Forces
Water is the major force shaping the landscape here. Wind has had little if any effect. Weathering occurs when rain, snow & ice break rock into smaller pieces. Erosion occurs when running water washes away weathered rock debris. Spanning vast amounts of time, these relentless forces have shaped, and will continue to shape, the landscape you see today.



Mechanical Weathering
Mechanical weathering is the most important type of weathering at Bryce Canyon. On about 200 days a year the temperature rises above freezing during the day and drops below freezing at night. During these freeze-thaw cycles, water seeps into cracks in the rock, expands as it freezes, and breaks apart the rock.



Chemical Weathering
Chemical weathering, while less important, also helps break down the rocks at Bryce Canyon. Water picks up weak acids from the air and soil, dissolving the calcium carbonate cement, which holds the clay, silt, and sand particles together. These particles then fall away, helping in a small way to shape the formations.

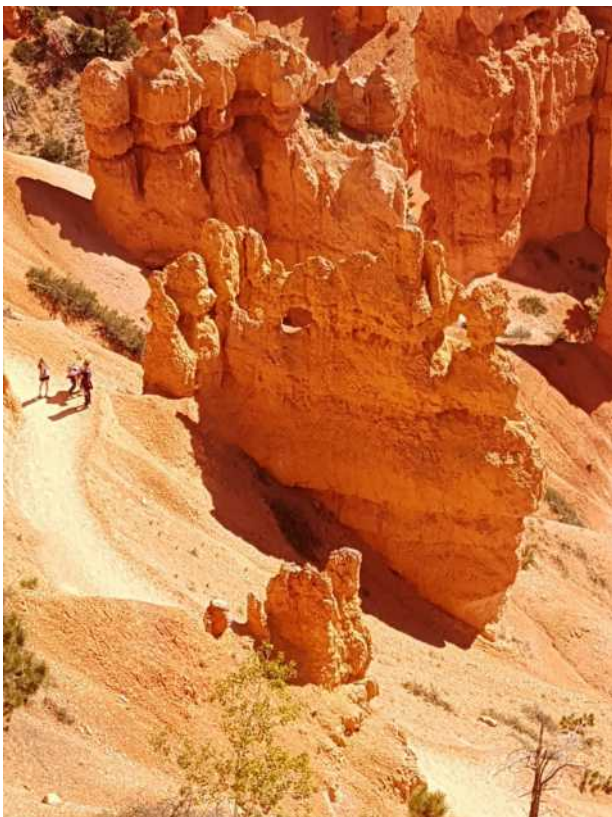
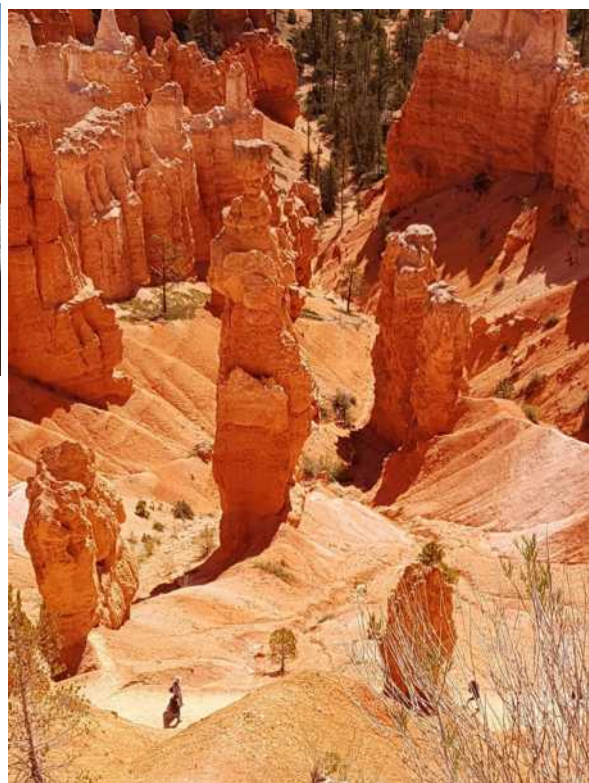


Shaping the Hoodoos
A hoodoo is a rock pinnacle left standing by the combined forces of weathering and erosion. Bryce Canyon has thousands of hoodoos, in all shapes, sizes and colors. These columns of rock are protected from erosion by a harder caprock called dolomite, a unique form of limestone reinforced by magnesium. Alternating hard and soft layers erode at different rates—a process known as differential erosion—which causes the varied hoodoo shapes. As the softer layers continue to erode, the hoodoos will eventually collapse.









We arrived at Sunset Point and were immediately surrounded by a mass of humanity. Drivers in cars looking for a parking spot, circling the small parking area. We decided our idea to arrive early, and leave early, was a good one.

We stopped just outside of the park at Ruby's Inn for a bite of lunch. Our server, Luis, was from the Mazatlan area of Mexico. His wife and son are at home in Mexico. He is alone here and looking forward to getting home soon.

Tomorrow we head for Zion National Park.

MAY 27 - ZION NATIONAL PARK, UT

I guess our luck had to change at some point and today was the day.

We left early for Zion NP and arrived at about 8:30 at the ticket booth, after a 40-mile drive from Kanab. Once we showed our pass, we continued our drive to the parking area and Visitor Centre. Along the way we went through two tunnels: a short one and then the 1.1 mile Zion Mount Carmel tunnel - no lights at all in the tunnel. Fortunately the park authorities were operating it as a one-way tunnel but this meant waiting for cars to come through before our line could proceed.



This is "Checkerboard Mesa" a prominent example of naturally sculpted rock art.





We're heading down there.

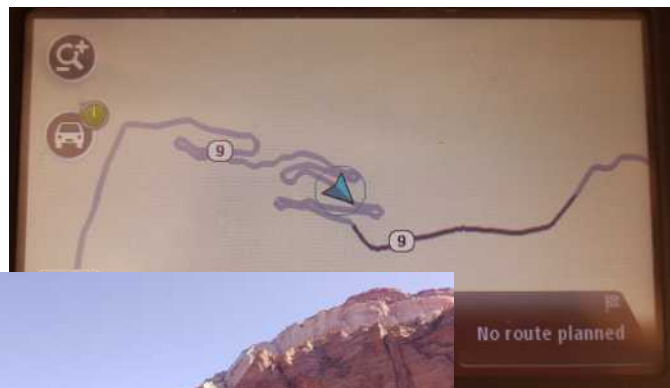


We arrived at the parking lot area and parked the van. But we were not ready for what faced us! Literally thousands of people, some still driving the parking lots looking for a space to park; others patiently waiting in line for a shuttle bus to take them into the canyon proper.

Jen had read that the park showed a 22-minute film, so we inquired at the Visitor's Centre. "Yes, it's in the building at Stop 2 (of the shuttle)." We looked at each other and decided - "another time". The young Ranger must have sensed our disappointment. "This is the busiest day of the year" he offered.

Unfortunately for us, we arrived in Kanab on the US Memorial Day weekend and very happy that we were able to find space in an RV park on such short notice. If we had planned our trip/route a little better, perhaps we could have visited Zion on a weekday. But it is what it is, so we will have to return another day.

We started back to the east entrance. The first chore was lining up again for the one-way tunnel, and then following a line of cars east. We stopped and I took this picture of Maud, our GPS. If you look closely you can see the Zion Mount Carmel tunnel. It is the darker part of the line (route).





It was now definitely time for a coffee. On the trip back we stopped here and had a nice breakfast.



We've been up this part of the Grand Staircase twice now and Jen finally managed to get a picture of part of it. Grand Staircase - Escalante is the largest Monument in the US - nearly twice the size of Rhode Island. Over 250 million years of Earth's geologic history reveals itself in technicolor cliffs of dark chocolate, bright vermillion, white, gray, and pink. Jen read that the staircase starts at Bryce Canyon and ends at the Grand Canyon.



Tomorrow we leave Kanab and head west towards Ely, NV. See you there.

MAY 28 - "YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AND I'LL TAKE THE LOW ROAD"

Last night, we checked the route we planned to take to Cedar City, UT from Kanab. There were no indications on our maps of any mountain passes, but in the literature we had picked up, there was a mention of a pass at almost 10,000' on Hwy 14.

After further checking we decided to go around rather than climb over the mountains. And we were glad we did. The route changed slightly but we ended up at the same place.

The drive to Hurricane, UT took us back into Arizona and out again, and the scenery was a lot of the same.



After a fairly level drive, we descended 1,700' into Hurricane, UT.



After a futile search for the only coffee shop open on Memorial Day in town, (the parking lot was FULL), we stopped at McD's for a coffee. We gotta stop going to McD's for coffee - the coffee's fine, but the service and the waits are frustrating. So much for a fast-food place!

Anyway, after coffee, we climbed out of the valley (St. George - 2,860') and headed for Cathedral Gorge State Park just outside of Panaca, NV (4,729').

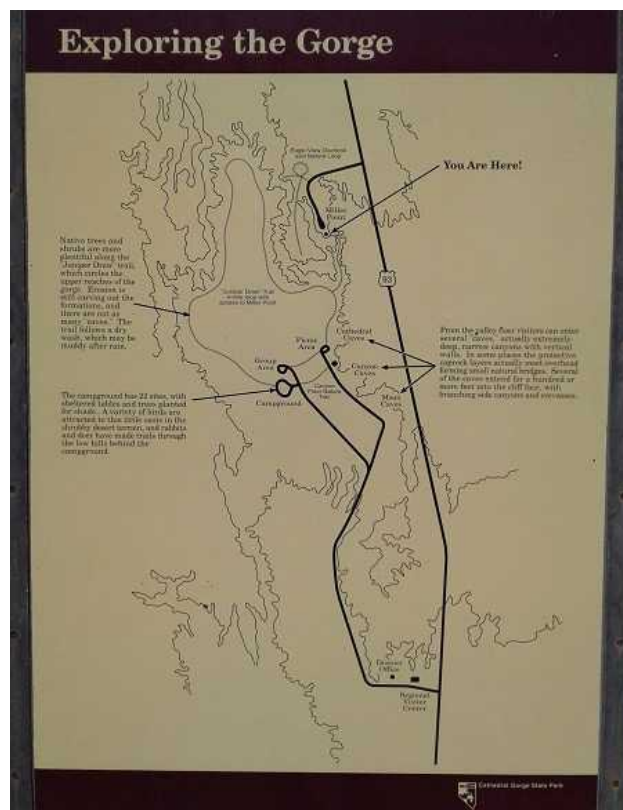
We found a nice site and settled in for the evening. Tomorrow we head for Ely, NV.



MAY 29 - BORING DRIVE TO ELY, NV (AND THEN SOME EXCITING STUFF!)

The campground in Cathedral Gorge State Park was very well kept, clean, and attractive.

We left early this morning heading north to Ely, NV. Just a short way up the climb out of the valley there was a sign for a Scenic Lookout, so we pulled in. Turns out it was Cathedral Gorge. You can see where we are in relation to the campground.



That was the most exciting part of the drive today. The rest was just long straight stretches with nothing really to look at. Ho hum!





We arrived at Cave Lake State Park about 10 miles south of Ely, NV, found a site and got set up.



We drove into Ely and turned left onto Hwy 50 and headed into the old part of town. As we stopped on a side street in front of the closed Tourist Information Centre, we saw an old steam engine chuffing out of town.

Back in Alfie we chased the engine up the track and out of town. We got ahead of the engine and I shot a video.



Later, back at the Nevada Northern Train Museum, the sign said "Tuesday Closed". Well I guess I better visit today then. So I did. Turns out the steam engine had a couple on a training ride. Pay the museum \$800 and they will teach you how to drive the steam engine.

Pour moi, a peasant, it was really interesting to be able to walk anywhere in the yard complex, with no restrictions.

By the time I finished my walkabout, the steam engine had returned to the station.



Later, after a grocery run, we quaffed an ale.



Tomorrow we head west along "the lonliest highway" a.k.a. Hwy 50 heading for Reno.

MAY 30 - TREK AROUND CAVE LAKE

A pretty uneventful day today. Alfie saw 120,000 miles on the speedometer and we drove into Ely. While Jen attended to some chores, I spent a couple of hours in the library updating the blog.

Back at the campground, in the afternoon I felt like exploring Cave Lake a little more. I ended up walking around the lake. The trail started off okay but about half-way around, became more of a "okay...where's it go now?"





Tomorrow we leave Ely heading west across the "loneliest road in America" a.k.a. Hwy 50. We'll see you somewhere along the way!

MAY 31 - OVER HILL AND DALE

With a full tank of gas we headed west on Hwy 50. Today's drive was interesting in that we drove up and over 11, yep, 11 summits. Before we reached Eureka, NV, we saw the tops of:

Robinson Summit: 7,607'

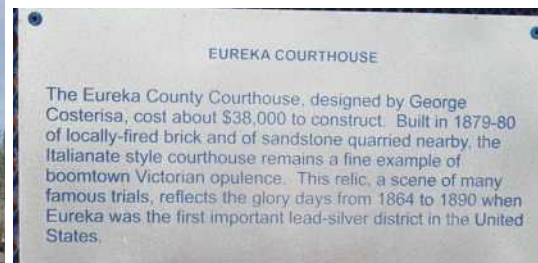
Little Antelope Summit: 7,438'

Pancake Summit: 6,517', and

Pinto Summit: 7,367'.

The descent, on the backside of each summit, varied from a few hundred feet to a lot more.

We reached Eureka where we had thought we might stop for the night. Nope - other than a couple of bars and a motel, oh, and the Opera House & the Court House there was nothing. Disappointing to say the least.



Continuing on, we thought the next "major" town - Austin - might hold something more.

Before we reached Austin, NV, we saw the tops of:

Hickson Summit: 6,546'

Bob Scotts Summit: 7,195', and

Austin Summit: 7,484'

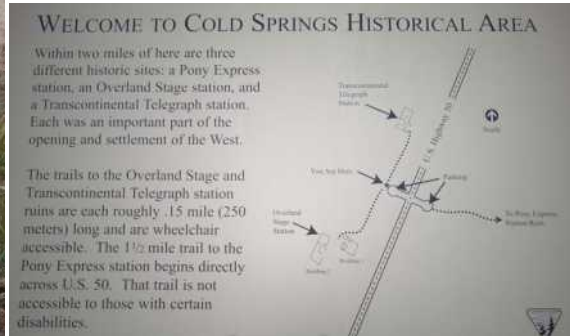
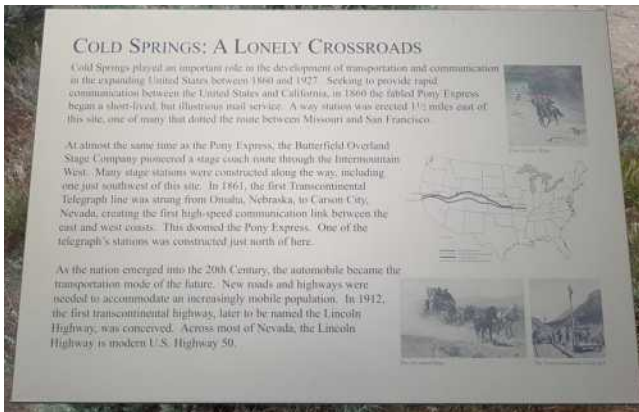
We gassed up in Austin at one of the two gas stations in town (there wasn't much else here on the side of the mountain) and continued our journey west.

We saw the tops of:

Mt Airy Summit: 6,679', and

New Summit: 6,348'.

We stopped at the historical marker and the Pony Express Station.



Continuing west, we saw the top of:

Drumm Summit: 4,600', and

Sand Springs Pass: 4,644'.

Okay, so 300 miles have gone by and we are now in Fallon, NV. We drove through here on our way south. We found the Lahontan State Park by the dam and selected a site below the dam.





A signboard posted at the Ranger station said the dam water level was rising by 4-6" a day.

Tomorrow we head north west towards Old Station, CA. Burney Falls State Park is a few miles north of there. We're interested in taking a look.