

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.

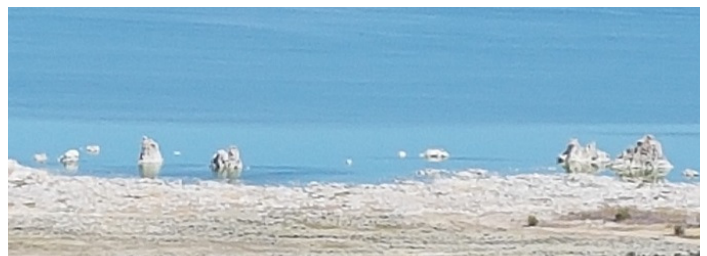


Here's a little bit of interesting information about Mono Lake.

“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').



TRAVELING TO Yosemite in Winter

WINTER TRAVEL ALERT
Conditions change on mountain roads in winter and spring. You should carry tire chains and be prepared to use them. The most reliable route to Yosemite at this time is Highway 50.

For current road conditions, please call 1-800-GAS ROAD

DRIVING TIMES FROM LOS ANGELES	Distance	Approx. Time
Mountain road usually closed each to most of the time		
June Lake Basin	6,500 ft.	1 1/2 hours
Mammoth Lakes	7,800 ft.	1 1/2 hours
Lake Tahoe	6,200 ft.	2 hours
Yosemite Valley	4,900 ft.	3 hours
Bishop Pass	7,200 ft.	3 hours
Mariposa Grove	5,575 ft.	10 hours

More Basin Ski Area
More Basin, one of the oldest continuously operating skiers in North America, was temporarily closed last year due to snow. More Basin has no ski lift, water that often from the same turbine-powered irrigation system. A combination of salt and slush, the water runs 10 to 15 feet below the ski area and is highly alkaline (pH 10). This unique chemistry is responsible for the lake's steelhead population, which includes the steelhead fish that can be seen at the South Fork area. A multitude of alpine lakes, too, are frozen over and closed to skiing and snowmobiling.

Yosemite Valley
Yosemite Valley is closed through approximately seven miles of their granite walls covered with mineral waterfalls, slushy spouts of both salt and sulphur. These environmental issues result in the need for thousands of tons of salt and sulfur granules to be applied for thousands of years.

Badger Pass Ski Area
Yosemite is 100% ski area. California's first ski resort, Badger Pass, offers the only ski lift in the Sierra Nevada. To ensure proper snowmaking, Badger Pass and Glacier Point, and many other areas of the park are covered in snow. Snowmaking is essential for winter safety, skiing, and snowmobiling. Snowmaking at Badger Pass, Glacier Point, provides an easy introduction to winter sports and helps keep the winter season open year-round.

Yosemite
Yosemite National Park and the Historic Yosemite Valley Center are closed to winter travel. The park is closed to winter travel. The park is closed to winter travel. The park is closed to winter travel.

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.

