

Alex, Marti and Lucky week 4

Monday and Tuesday were rest days from the road. We spent time with Dallas and John. Dallas and I did a couple of Second Life shows, Lucky got some dog training on how to behave around chickens and cats. We did some motorcycle riding and I went flying with my friend Tom Hunter in his Thorp T-18. We had a good visit with my friend Sherman Smoot who owns a winery in Templeton. The cd player in the van had quit so I spent time troubleshooting it and finally fixed it.

By Wednesday morning we were packed and ready to continue the adventure. Our goal for the day was to reach Grover Hot Springs on the Nevada side of the Sierras. We didn't make it. We decided to stop at a grocery store for supplies in Fresno....apparently we were not briefed. The freeway through town is countersunk. You can't see anything along the road but shrubs etc. We took a chance as we neared the edge of town and exited. We did finally find a grocery store and I won't bore you with the details, but let's just say it took an hour and a half to get back on the highway.

Our plan was to take hwy 49 on the scenic route. It was mildly scenic compared to the California coast but it was incredibly slow....some of the worst grades and turns we have experienced on the trip. What looked like 2 hours on the map was really 5 hours. We finally got headed east on 88 and stopped at Silver Lake to camp for the night. It is really pretty.



Silver Lake California

We were asleep by 8:30 and up and ready to go Thursday at 5:30, on the road by 6. It was more up and down in the mountains before we emerged on the Owens Valley floor. The poor little van was huffing and puffing.



Monitor Pass driving out of Sierras



Owens Valley

Once you get on the desert floor it is a stark contrast from the mountains. We went from winding, steep tree lined woods to straight roads where you could make some time. The Nevada desert from a drive by looks dull, but just like the Texas desert when you get out into it there is a lot of beauty. Driving east you climb one ridge to the summit and then plunge into the next valley where the road just seems to go on into infinity.



road to infinity



Walker River

We drove on through country that I have flown over many times and sung songs about but never really saw it up close. Marti and I sing a song called Darcy Farrow. "Where the Walker runs down to the Carson Valley plain...". We drove through Yerrington town and on to Walker Lake. I do believe the desert has as many jewels as the mountains.



Walker Lake



Extraterrestrial Highway

We stopped at Walker Lake....a pristine clear lake about 20 miles long without a single boat on it. We were the only ones in the campground so we decided to take a quick shower with our shower bag. Lucky was ready to fetch and brought Marti a stick. She threw the stick as far into the lake as she could throw it..."no Lucky..not now". Lucky swam out and got the stick...soaking wet she rolled in the sand until she was covered...then jumped back into the van...what were you thinking Marti?

We drove all day, stopping in Hawthorne for lunch and an internet break. The Extraterrestrial Highway was a hoot. We ended up stopping for the night at a Nevada State Park called Cathedral Gorge... What a find. It is a canyon carved out of layers of volcanic ash. It has similarities to Devils Playground in Texas but is much more extensive and you can hike all through it. It is probably the most unique natural thing I have ever seen....recommended if you ever pass by this way.



The caves and tunnels were the best part but really hard to capture in a photo. After the hike, we took a shower together at the campground for 25 cents and watched the sun go down....perfect day.

We met a couple on our hike the night before that told us of a warm spring swimming hole just outside of town. We got up early and took the bikes off to go in search of it. It was as advertised....I would say about 85 degrees. I'll bet it is fun in the winter. We bought some fresh veggies from the local farmer and we were on our way to Utah by 8 am. We took turns on Marti's motorcycle and rode to Cedar City where we found some wi-fi at the local IHOP. We loaded the bikes on the trailer and headed down I-15 to Zion National Park. Zion was no disappointment and it was a lovely drive. On the other side of Zion we got on Highway 89 and headed north. We found an RV park just outside of Bryce Canyon and set up camp. It was 3:30 in the afternoon. The camp hostess was very nice and said she would keep an eye on Lucky while she rode the bikes into the park. It was spectacular. The whole day was just too much great scenery to process it all. We took a ton of photos but here are a few from the day.



The warm spring



a couple of tourists and the yipping dog at Zion



More Zion



At Red Canyon just a couple of miles from camp



First look at Bryce Canyon



Doing the loop hike to the base of the canyon



More Bryce Canyon

By the time we got back to the campsite, we were pooped. I knew Marti didn't feel like cooking so we treated ourselves to pizza. On the way out of the RV park we spotted a 3 ft rattle snake.....not exactly what I would expect to find in the high country of Utah...never the less there he was. You will have to catch the video to see it.

We awoke Saturday morning to another clear cool sunrise. We took our showers and had a lazy breakfast. As we packed up to leave Lucky was in the van waiting...panting....waiting for more two lane road. She would not be disappointed. The drive from Bryce Canyon through Castle Reef National Park and up to I-70 was as spectacular as any of the parks. We stopped at an outfitter/coffee shop with internet in Escalante.



Coming off the Kaiparowits Plateau

We stopped at a little roadside pulloff and had lunch. There was an excellent view and a very unique rock formation.



Capitol Reef National Park



Road side lunch

We were only on the interstate for about 30 miles then we exited south to The Arches National Park. We were thinking we would camp there but as soon as we got out of the van we knew it was too hot. It was scorching...probably about 95 but after our 3 weeks in mountains and coastal air it was hot. Arches most famous landmark crumbled last summer when the primo arch broke and fell to the ground overnight. There was still a lot to see and we saw most of it from the air-conditioned comfort of the van.



Arches Park Avenue



Arches Balanced Rock

We will come back to Arches another day and hike the trails...they looked very interesting.



This is why they call it Arches

We left the park and followed the Colorado back to the interstate. It was another scenic overload



Following the Colorado

Once back on the interstate we made good time to Colorado and stopped in Fruita and spent the night at the Colorado River State Park. We finished out the evening with an excellent Chinese dinner just outside the gate.

Sunday morning we found a nice little coffee shop in town and had a good breakfast. Marti couldn't resist buying some of their coffee. It was a straight shot on Highway 50 to Sergeants where we unloaded my bike and spit up. I rode across Marshall pass (dirt bike heaven) while Marti stayed on the highway to Salida and then up to Pancha Pass where our friends Don Glittenburg and Sue Applegate live.



Marshall Pass on the bike



Marti and Sue with her sexy glasses

We went to an evening reunion of Don's family at the Historic Jackson Hotel in Salida. It was a good meal but there were at least one too many rug rats.

Monday found us waking up in the van in front of Don's cabin. It had been a pleasant night and we were up early making coffee. I spent the better part of the morning working on the van. The cigarette lighter fuse kept blowing. I had the front of the panel apart trying to figure out what was wrong. I concluded that without my maintenance manual (conveniently left at home) I couldn't troubleshoot the problem. Realizing that the other 12 volt plug was working, I abandoned the project and put everything back together. We took a hike and visited with our friend Sue. I took a short jaunt on my motorcycle on the back roads and we went in to town and got ice and decided to head out. If we could get a few hours behind us it would make it possible to get home on Tuesday. We debated since temperatures in Denton have been above 100 for the last week. We finally decided to go anyway because we have a lot to do before we leave next week on our next trip.

Once the decision was made, we were off. We drove down the south side of Pancha Pass to Alamosa and then over La Vida Pass to I-25 and south to Trinidad Colorado. We knew it was going to be just a sleepover so we stopped at Walmart...word to the wise, Super Walmarts are open 24 hours. They attract more campers and semis. Bring earplugs....you will sleep better. We fixed tuna sandwiches, drank some wine and tried to watch a movie that wouldn't play....we went to sleep....awake....sleep....awake...you get the idea. By 5:30 we were ready to get on down the road. After all, it was really 6:30 where we were going....home.



Last night sleeping in the van

Texas greeted us with a “howdy welcome back” panhandle wind blowing strong and a temperature of 95 at 11am. I hope the tires will make it home through this scorching pavement.



4 lane highways are borrrrrrrring
We made it home about 5:15pm 105 degrees with no major issues with tires or van....7200 miles...a great trip. Thanks for traveling with us.