

## **Grand Southwest tour road trip – 2700 miles, 9 days, 4 states.**

If 1 word were worth a 1000 pictures it would have to be “awesome”!

The idea came up during a hike we had made a few weeks earlier – Yong Hong and his wife and I were hiking in the Big Basin redwoods when we got to talking about making a road trip. 2 days later, we were asking for time off, and the next day we were checking out maps from AAA. The excitement was building and we could hardly keep it in – we even talked about leaving early and taking extra days off!

Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup> finally came around after some long days of waiting – Yong Hong showed up at my door at 7:30 and we were off.



### **Day 1**

It had been raining the last few days and we were hoping for good weather on the trip – the satellites upstairs had been predicting sunny weather so we hoped for the best. We left the bay area under mostly cloudy and drizzly skies and headed up 101 and east on 80 across the Bay Bridge, past the dozen or so multi-million dollar cranes working on the bridge – is that project ever going to be done? It felt like another regular trip to Tahoe – winding our way up the foothills and up over the Donner Pass in the Sierras. The weather was clearing and there was no snow on the pass – but it was close, probably just a couple hundred feet higher... The pine forests started quickly changing to desert as we descended into Reno on the edge of the Great Basin. We had a nice lunch in Reno, the “Biggest little city in the world” at the Silver Legacy casino – of course, the gambling temptations were too great and we had to play even just for a short while. We just hit the nickel slots for a bit, and with his very last nickel, Yong Hong won big – 225 nickels!

Back on the road – I took the wheel for a bit and we continued east on 80 past barren ridge after barren ridge of mountains across the Great Basin desert. Many ridges were capped with clouds from the clearing storm that passed the day earlier, and we got to see one of the most brilliant rainbows

from a rare storm in the desert. We were looking forward to a great trip – the first day was just a driving day and the most boring, but it was still great.

We reached the eastern NV border around dinnertime and you could tell by the bright lights of the casinos, since gambling is not allowed in the predominantly Mormon state of UT. We got a quick dinner at the casino and tried our luck once again. This time, I had an even bigger payout – 1400x by matching the bar-7's on the slot machine! Too bad I was just playing pennies this time, but still, it was \$14, enough to cover dinner!

## Day 2

We were up around 7 – this would become the routine for most of the trip in order to maximize our daylight and not make the evenings too late. It was nice being up early and seeing the sunrise over the Bonneville Salt Flats as we headed on 80 east toward Salt Lake City. Mysterious mountain reflections hovered in the shallow lakes around the salt flats as we headed on what was probably the straightest road in America for at least 50 miles. We got to test the alignment of the car – how far could you go without touching anything? The road was straight enough, and the cruise control was on!



The sunbeams shone like heaven through the billowing clouds over the Wasatch Range east of Salt Lake City as we reached downtown. We had finally reached the other side of the Great Basin desert. Even from 10 miles away we could see the spires and golden angels on the great Mormon temple. It was interesting though a bit depressing during our tour of Temple Square, the Mormon capital. The temple was fascinating – constructed of brilliant white marble and the architecture was a grand work of art. The gardens were impeccably maintained and the streets were the cleanest I had seen. Friendly guides were always around us to show us around and to share about their religion – they had their speeches and brochures always ready for tourists like us. It almost seemed too clean, however, even a bit sterile. When the guides were talking, it just seemed too shallow and artificial – I wonder

how many people truly believed what they were saying.

I had gotten some directions from a friend to a great hot spring in the mountains east of Provo – I had been on a backpacking trip to some hot springs just a couple weeks earlier and he gave me some great tips. He is addicted to hot springs and I think some of his addiction wore off on me. We headed south on 15 to 6 east through the Wasatch Mountains up to the 5<sup>th</sup> water hot spring. It was about a 2.5-mile hike each way through a nice oak and maple and pine forest along the river up to a waterfall and the springs were around the falls. We just wanted to soak for hours! It was the most relaxing mineral bath in a while – you could feel your skin tingling in the water with all the minerals, and there were pools where the water was just the right temperature. As we headed out we spotted a nice red rock formation with some nice sandstone arches, caves, and pillars – just a preview of what was to come in the next few days. I couldn't resist wandering a bit and practicing my photography for tomorrow!

Back on the main road toward highway 6, the car pulled in interesting “stunt” when eyes were looking around at the scenery, hands were groping for CD's, and minds were focused on what was to come the

next day... the right wheels went off the pavement, and with a bit of over steering, the car skidded sideways across the pavement, fortunately not flipping over or landing in the ditch... we were fine though a bit shaken after the “stunt”, and we still had almost 2000 more miles to go! We’d have to be careful the next few days since the scenery was only going to get better! Back on highway 6 until we hit 70 under a beautiful sunset – the crimson hues lighting the remnants of the storm clouds from the last couple days. From 70, we crossed the Green River and headed on 191 south to Moab. We would have to wait for sunrise to see the amazing red rock scenery all around us, but in the meantime, we enjoyed steaks and ice cream at the Moab diner for dinner. We got a room at the local Apache motel – made famous since that was where John Wayne once stayed during his film screenings of some western movies!

### Day 3

We were finally in Moab – looking forward to a great few days. The weather forecast was for sunny weather the next several days and the rain was finally gone for now. We were out by 7:00 so we could see the sunrise off the red rocks in the park. It was such a sublime place – seeing the morning sun shining off the Three Gossips – a set of elegant red rock pinnacles. In the distance we could see windows in the rock opening to the blue sky above. Yong Hong wanted to stop so often for pictures – I wondered if we would ever see the whole park!

Up ahead we could see the Balanced Rock teetering on a narrow pinnacle – apparently there was another one nearby which fell in the last 20 years or so. How much longer would this one last? I guess old ones are falling all the time, but new ones are being created at the same time.

A little farther down, we noticed a turnout and what appeared to be like a hallway to a series of deep caves and hollows in the rock. Most of the area was open slickrock and it was like you could wander anywhere and explore the area. Some of the caves that appeared to be so close ended up actually being much farther away and bigger than we expected in the beginning – what appeared originally as just a few small pockets were actually caves that were 100 feet wide and probably 30 or 40 feet deep! We enjoyed the Incredible Hulk movie last night and we saw that the Hulk must have gotten mad and punched the cliff to let out some steam. Or maybe it was a finger of God playing around, poking into the rock, like when we were kids and we would poke our fingers into sand sculptures on the beach to make tunnels.

I saw a glow from the rock on one side and later I realized it was sunlight streaming through a great arch probably 40 feet wide. Going up to the arch to get a closer look, I realized it was actually a set of 2 arches side by side. We had to be careful to not tread too much on the soil – it was actually harboring a whole colony of moss, fungus, algae and other microorganisms, which provides the fertility needed for the plants and trees to grow. It was called “cryptobiotic”, meaning hidden life. An intricate network of creation was there hidden beneath our feet and it was only in the last few decades we even realized it even existed. Sadly enough we could easily see where other people had left their footprints in the past, and there were paths where there were no plants or grass or anything because this soil was trampled.



The area was full of nearly parallel sandstone fins and over time the rock had eroded leaving many “windows” behind. Just a bit farther were the North and South Windows – 2 beautiful arches side by side framing a brilliant blue sky. Turret Arch was just



around the corner – it was fun to play around with the photography a bit – seeing arches within arches, sweeping arches splitting the sky, and the warm sunlight glow through the windows. It is one thing to just get snapshots of the arches, but the graceful formations allow for so much more. Just on the other

side of the street, we saw where we were earlier – actually the 2 arches side by side was the Double Arch, but we had gone from the other side!

The most famous part of the park is probably the Delicate Arch – so famous that it is one of the state icons and exists on most of the UT license plates! We pulled into the trailhead parking and just down the way was Wolfe Ranch, consisting of a couple small cabins and horse corral near a muddy creek. It was interesting to see someone could live out in the middle of nowhere – a very beautiful though lonely setting. Just down the path a little way was a set of Pueblo Indian petroglyphs. I had missed it on the map, but when a sign pointed toward the petroglyphs, we decided to check it out and soon discovered some centuries-old artwork carved into the dark patina layer on a large boulder.

The park had been mostly empty so far, especially since it was off-season, early in the morning, and a weekday, but now there were quite a few people on the trail. Just beyond the ranch were some interesting large chunks of what looked like opal, nice slickrock slabs, and rock cairns (one built as a miniature “delicate arch” to build the anticipation). Shortly afterward was a nice window in the wall, which opened right toward the Delicate Arch! What a view! The majestic 45-foot arch stands by itself on the edge of a huge whirlpool of smooth slickrock. It was almost as if the arch was going to get washed down a huge drain! I went one way around the whirlpool and Yong Hong and Haixia went the other way and we met up at the arch. I wonder if the other fins and pinnacles around were once arches that have now been eroded, or if they might form more “delicate arches” in the future.

In the northern part of the park is the Fiery Furnace – a rugged set of parallel ridges and narrow canyons full of beautiful sandstone formations and arches. The sign warned that you needed a permit and recommended you go with a ranger since it was too easy to get lost – there are no trails and the canyons form a maze. We thought about going back to the visitor center for lunch and to get a guided tour, but we were so fascinated with the place that we just kept going – we didn’t want to lose an hour!

Just past the Fiery Furnace was the Devil’s Garden (so many “evil” names of such beautiful places...). The Devil’s Garden was one of the more popular trails – the trail winded through a series of narrow canyons between the fins, and soon a huge natural span was visible on the left. We followed the hopping bunnies along the trail and soon ended up at Landscape Arch. At 290 feet wide, it is the longest in the park, and except for Rainbow Bridge near Lake Powell, it is the longest in the world. The arch however is only 6 feet wide in places and some 50-foot chunks have fallen in recent years, closing the trail underneath the arch! I wonder how much longer this arch is going to survive.

A little farther on the trail was Wall Arch again framing the bright blue sky. We decided to take a bunch of spur trails and ended up at Partition and Navajo arches – some of the most elegant in the park. Partition with its twin windows looking into the distance, and Navajo with its nice tunnel and golden light were especially attractive. Twisted pinion pine trees and more rabbits kept us company. The narrow sandstone fins were pretty unique – on the topo map, they appear as a bunch of parallel

lines for miles! After several foiled attempts to reach the top of the highest fin, I was able to reach the top of the next highest one – with a little help... thanks Yong Hong for the boost! Although from a distance it looks like you can climb up almost anything, the rock is often steeper and more slippery than you expect!

Back on the trail, we were just going to head back when two more arches caught our attention – Tunnel and Pine Tree arches. We first noticed Tunnel Arch by seeing its shadow (actually the lack of shadow) on the opposite wall. Golden sunlight was streaming through the tunnel and a smaller tunnel to its side. Pine Tree Arch was worth a visit too – opening to a great view below and a small herd of deer grazing in the setting sun.



On our way back we spotted another arch in the distance capturing the sunlight - Skyline Arch forming another window to the sky. Just a bit further was a trail meandering through the narrow canyons in one edge of the Fiery Furnace. I see now how it would be so easy to get lost in the Fiery Furnace, and we only went in a little way. A nice stroll across the sandy floor led to Sand Dune Arch neatly hidden between the sandstone fins. A few narrow side canyons went between some of the other fins and it would be so easy to spend several hours playing around and exploring, though some of the climbing

was a bit tricky. We'd have to save that for another day.

It had been a great day at Arches – we got to visit at least a few of the nearly 1900 natural arches in the park. We got to reflect a bit on the day while watching the setting sun over the Fiery Furnace and snow-capped La Sal mountains behind. The few clouds were lit up in a brilliant coral pink as we made our way out of the park and toward some place for dinner. We splurged a bit at the Desert Bistro, feasting on lamb and gourmet pasta and some local Castle Creek wines.

I had forgotten today was actually Halloween – on our way back to the hotel, I saw some kids with flashlights on the sidewalk and later realized they were trick-or-treaters! Even in the grocery store, some trick-or-treaters came in for a tasty treat.

Back in our hotel, we followed our routine, getting a nice shower, flipping through pictures, watching basketball (the NBA season was just starting), and going through the map, planning for the next day. It took quite a bit of time deleting duplicates and trying to save enough memory for the next day. (Is A better, or B? Or how about C?) Yong Hong had looked for some extra memory – the meager 512 MB was running out quite fast. At least between both of our cameras, we should be able to capture most of what we want!

#### **Day 4**

We weren't going to make the mistake of relying on there being food at the park this time, so we got some breakfast and lunch to go. Just as we headed out, a beautiful mist was lying over the Colorado River as we headed north toward Canyonlands. Soon afterward, I started to panic when my camera battery started blinking... I had made sure to charge it the night before, but it was still dead for some reason... A coyote passed by (maybe looking for the wild road runner), and then I really wished I had my battery working. I had just gotten a new charger and batteries just before the trip, too! It wasn't

until the next morning I realized what happened... I plugged the charger into the bathroom outlet the night before (making sure the charging indicator light was on), turned off the light and went to bed. The next morning, I went back in to the bathroom (of course turning on the light), and checked and the battery was still charging. However, all those hours I was sleeping with the light off, the battery charger was also sleeping – the outlet is linked with the light. Fortunately, Yong Hong had a fresh set of batteries, and we managed to do some battery swapping – taking turns with the batteries throughout the day.

Our first stop was at Dead Horse Point State Park. I had seen many pictures, but as we were driving toward the park, there was no sign that we were going in the right direction. The landscape was just flat desert and no canyons were in sight. Then we realized we were coming from the rim of the canyon and you won't know it's there until you're really there! We could start making out cliffs in the distance when we reached the visitor center. It just turned 8:00 and the center was just opening – perfect timing. It was fascinating to learn about the different rock layers, alternating hard and soft, resulting in the steep cliffs and plateaus throughout the canyon.

The river at the bottom is the Colorado River, which we had passed earlier in the trip a bit further north. There however, the canyon was hardly noticeable – it just looked like an ordinary river. It was amazing how the scenery can change in just a few miles. Apparently, many of these canyons were formed when the river was on a flat plain like the Mississippi. Later, when the Colorado Plateau was uplifted, the meanders in the rivers got “frozen” into place, forming the canyons. The view was sublime – seemingly timeless as we enjoyed a masterpiece of creation in the silent and still morning light.

We enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at the viewpoints, swapping camera batteries and shooting some panoramic shots. On our way, we crossed a narrow neck of land barely wide enough for the road – the viewpoint might soon end up being an “island in the sky”. Legend has it a bunch of horses were corralled on the “island” and a fence was put across the neck. Many of the horses were sold, and the ones left over were left in the corral with 1000-foot cliffs all around, trapping them. Ironically, they died of thirst though water was in sight all around. That is why the place is called “Dead Horse Point”.

Back on the road again, we headed a little further to Canyonlands National Park – reaching the visitor center at 9:00, right when it opened. What timing again! The rangers gave a nice summary of what was worth seeing in this part of the park (actually called the real “Island in the Sky”).



Again, it felt like we had the place all to ourselves as we headed toward Mesa Arch. Although we had seen so many arches yesterday, each one was so unique that you couldn't see too many of them! Mesa Arch was one of my favorites – framing a great view on a 500-foot cliff of the canyons

below and La Sal Mountains beyond. Time for some more battery sharing...

In the center of the Island in the Sky was the Green River overlook – another sublime view like that at Dead Horse Point. The land was almost completely flat and then the canyons appeared suddenly. If

you were walking toward the rim, you would have no idea there was a canyon nearby until you were probably right near the rim! The plain was formed in the “White Rim” layer of rock, which was apparently much harder and the canyons would expand through great collapses of large columns of rock forming sudden cliffs. Three tributaries of the river made a set of canyons like fingers in a large hand.

The ranger recommended seeing the Aztec Buttes – I had no idea what to expect until we headed that way to do the hike. It actually turned out to be one of the most fun hikes we did. Climbing a steep slickrock butte, we arrived just under the rim at the top where the sandstone had formed a small overhang. Just around the corner, the overhang grew to a huge cave in the smooth white sandstone. Haixia was peeking her head into something and I saw it was an Ancestral Puebloan Indian granary which was several hundred years old, where the Indians had stored food. The term “Anasazi” is actually a Navajo word meaning “enemy ancestors”, and many archaeologists are considering that term derogatory since it refers to a tribe as an enemy. So instead of the tribe prevalent in the four corners area being called “Anasazi”, many archaeologists and publishers are calling these people Ancestral Puebloans.

There were probably hundreds or thousands of these Indian ruins in the four corners area – this was just a glimpse, but it was fascinating to see the ruins so well preserved in the desert climate protected from the elements in the cave. The cave actually went most of the way around the butte with several other granaries hiding in deeper pockets. The cross-bedded sandstone layers were beautiful, exposed by repeated weathering of the butte, which was probably an ancient fossilized sand dune.

Our next stop through the park took us to Upheaval Dome. I had heard of this place when learning about meteorite impacts on Earth and they compared it to the Meteor Crater outside Flagstaff. However, it is actually pretty controversial what caused it – some geologists think it might have been caused by uplift of a giant salt dome underneath and then the overlying rock eroded over time, leaving the crater. I guess for now it is left to our imagination. Maybe it was just the Incredible Hulk romping around a bit.

It was a beautiful view from the rim of the crater below, the domes underneath, and the La Sal Mountains in the distance. We took some time to explore the slickrock formations and rocks nearby and challenging our rock climbing skills a bit. Thanks Yong Hong for being a “human ladder” to get the 3 of us up to the farthest rock on the viewpoint! On our way back down, I actually thought it was easier to jump, but later when I looked at where I had jumped from, I probably wouldn’t try it again!



We decided to check out the Grand View point at the end of the Island in the Sky, and decided it would be a good sunset place. We realized we had still a bit of time so we decided to visit the Gooseberry trail to the White Rim. Throughout the day we noticed the White Rim bordering the deepest canyon, but access was mainly only through rough 4WD roads (actually a lot of canyon country is only accessible through 4WD), and since we still had many miles to drive to get back, we decided not to risk it! We saw the trail

was only about 2.5 miles each way, so we should be able to reach the rim and be back in a couple hours. We were soon proved wrong however...

The canyon walls drop pretty sheer for the first 500 feet – it was pretty amazing how anybody even built a trail down the wall in the first place, as we descended layer upon layer of red sandstone. Interesting tafoni caves honeycombed the soft sandstone and slabs of harder rock stuck out. The view of the White Rim became more spectacular but when we checked our time, we soon realized why the map said, “allow 4-6 hours for the hike” – we thought it would just take 2-3, based off the distance. The rim just above the white rim was also harder than the surrounding rock, resulting in deep caves and cracks underneath the rock, with many mushroom shaped caps protruding some distance out. A fun place to play and explore for a bit, but alas it was already 4:00 and we wanted to be sure to get back up the steep and rocky trail to the rim before dark.

We enjoyed a nice sunset at the Grand View point, watching the deep red hues coming off the rocks all around. The red sunlight colored the scenery very elegantly and we watched the remaining rays of the sun while nursing our sore legs from the hike. We had climbed 1000 feet in about an hour going back up the canyon!

It was a great day – I would make sure I got my batteries charged for the next day though. On our way back, we spotted something running across the road – like a fast running bird. It was a roadrunner – I wondered where the coyote from the morning had gone so we could tell it where the roadrunner was! Back in Moab, we enjoyed some local brews at the Moab Brewery before following our usual routine before bed – shower, basketball game, sorting/deleting pictures, trip planning for the next day.

## **Day 5**

We had done a bit of hiking the last couple days – we decided to let the car do more of the work today and rest our legs a bit. The La Sal Mountain Loop Road looked pretty interesting – winding up deep into the mountains. I wondered if it would still be open, considering the recent snows. I checked and it was. It started along the Colorado River just east of Moab, winding along the canyon past the sandy shores of the river and the golden cottonwood trees. The next leg in the loop took us past a mini “monument valley” with several nice buttes – the Priest and Nuns and Castle Rock. The views kept getting better as we made our way up the mountainside, and the trees changed into oaks and aspens and junipers and firs on our way up. The last couple brilliant leaves were hanging on to some of the aspens – I was trying to imagine the scenery just a few weeks ago. A couple inches of snow was clinging to the slopes as we climbed to 7000 or 8000 feet toward the 12000-foot peaks of the La Sal Mountains. Mountain birds called from among the aspen groves and some deer were grazing lazily. It was just a glimpse of the wonders that lay deeper in the mountains, but we’d have to save that for another day.

Back on highway 191, we headed south toward the Needles district of Canyonlands. We had seen many signs and posters for the heavily advertised Hole in the Rock, supposedly a 5000 square foot house cut from solid rock. I had been to Petra a few years ago and had seen temples and buildings carved from solid red sandstone, and was intrigued. It was originally a classic “American road trip” diner where memorabilia abounded, including license plates from all around the country, American icons of the past (Betty Boop, Coca-Cola, Marilyn Monroe, “Eat and Get Gas”, and Route 66 signs). It was just 2498 miles one way to Miami and 2251 miles to New York and 7233 to Copenhagen (now that would be a “real” road trip – at 70 miles/hr you could reach there in theory in just over 4 days...). Hard to imagine when gas was just 17 cents a gallon. Nearby were some amazing sculptures – a full size “truck” made completely from old scrap metal – including bolts, ball bearings,



springs, and old license plates. A longhorn bull also made by the same artist guarded the visitor center.



Now back to what we had originally planned to do – tour the Hole in the Rock! All 14 rooms and 5000 square feet were carved from solid rock. No longer a diner, it was made into a house never in need of A/C or heating – the rock is always between a comfortable 65 and 70 degrees. The owner was quite a hard worker – not only did he drill the rock using hand drills, he was a prolific artist, with many paintings and other carvings to his name.

We continued south on 191 and saw a small turnoff to Wilson Arch. Although not so advertised and announced like the more famous arches, it was a pleasant surprise to discover it along the way – the span was nearly as impressive if not even more so than many arches in Arches National Park. The smooth banded slickrock framed the towering arch with many elegant curves. It could probably be made into a landmark where people might have to pay to visit, but it was nice to just have it simple.

We had almost reached the turnoff toward the Needles district of Canyonlands. It was marked with a large rock called Church Rock. You could maybe see it as a church if you looked at it the right way, but legend has it there was a cult many years ago called “Home of Truth” who believed they would blast off to heaven inside the massive rock. It sounded a bit like the Heaven’s Gate cult where they thought the Hale-Bopp comet would take people to heaven. Yet another foiled “quick and easy” attempt to reach heaven without the need for repentance and forgiveness of sin through Christ. Fortunately Home of Truth fell apart and didn’t result in a mass suicide like the Heaven’s Gate cult.



On our way toward Canyonlands was the Newspaper Rock – a bunch of petroglyphs left by the ancient Pueblo Indians. Pictures telling stories of hunting and being hunted with images of snakes, monsters, bears, and deer colored the rock face. It was a window into the imagination of the Indian tribe and what some parts of daily life might have entailed. If we were to carve a “newspaper rock” today, would we put the front page of the New York Times? What images from daily life today would be remembered 300 years from now? We live a hectic life along a road perhaps “traveled by many but

remembered by few” as elegantly put by John Denver – would “reality TV” be remembered? How about rock n’ roll or hip hop music? Unrest in Iraq? Icons of society – Madonna, Britany Spears, Shaquille O’Neal? The Simpsons, Family Guy, American Idol? The Internet, TiVo, Blackberry, Google? Maybe the memorabilia at Hole in the Rock would serve as a good relatively modern “newspaper rock” preserving elements of “Road Trip America” during the 50’s.

We thought we had already seen a good part of Canyonlands yesterday and didn’t expect a whole lot today, but we were soon surprised. Our first stop took us to the Roadside Ruin, a fairly well preserved

Puebloan Indian granary in the rock. A little further, down a dirt road was the trail to a cowboy camp hidden in a cave. It must have been a welcome sight for cowboys on multi-day rides across the desert to find such a place – containing nice shelter caves and even a spring with a pool of fresh water inside the cave. Softer layers of sandstone underneath had eroded faster, leaving large overhangs all around a canyon, and a camp complete with bed, stove, and food storage was tucked inside one of the larger caves. The trail took us over smooth white sandstone outcrops over some ladders to the top where the scenic La Sal and Abajo mountains were visible. Talk about prime real estate for a cowboy!

A little farther in the park, we saw the “Wooden Shoe” arch in the distance – looked like a smaller “shoe” cut out of a larger shoe. We decided to check out the Needles Overlook, which took us on a 3-mile dirt road – we were just getting the car warmed up for some more bumpy roads coming up the next couple days! The dirt road rapidly became a rough 4WD road - “High clearance 4WD with experienced drivers only” was enough to deter us. Most people parked where the road gets rough and trails go in different directions.

We picked the trail up to the Needles Overlook – taking us about a mile over nice white and orange slickrock with a bunch of mushroom shaped caps where the softer orange rock eroded faster. Haixia and I showed our “strength” by supporting huge rocks with a single finger and splitting giant boulders with our bare hands!



We passed a nice row of “needles” which then led to a series of slot canyons with smooth banded sandstone. The slot canyons perfectly framed the Needles on the other side. It was so much fun to play around and explore the canyons a bit –Yong Hong and Haixia took the regular trail around (boring to me...) when I looked for a way through the narrow polished sandstone canyons (more interesting) ... unfortunately my efforts were foiled 3 times and I couldn’t find an easy way through (though I was so close – with a little boost I could have made it...). At least the scenery was

spectacular with canyons framing postcard views on both sides! I finally gave up and met the others on the trail – but the urge to climb around and explore some more seemed irresistible... that would have to wait for another time though.

It had been a great day – but we took a bit longer at the Needles overlook that we probably wouldn’t have time for the Slickrock trail. But we had seen plenty of slickrock anyway so no big deal... we visited Pothole Point, where deep potholes have formed in the rock, trapping water and making many small lakes. Actually these small lakes contain entire ecosystems containing microscopic algae, shrimp, and even small snails swimming in the potholes. Just like in the cryptobiotic soil, life was everywhere.

We enjoyed a leisurely sunset at big spring overlook – some nice caves framed the view rather elegantly. On our way back, we took a short cut on Hart’s Draw Road through the Abajo mountains toward Monticello and over to 191 to Blanding. It was quite a view from up the mountains even though the light was waning fast. You had to pay a bit of extra attention to the road though – we spotted a fox running across the road, and later probably a dozen deer. Apparently a major deer

migration route runs along the slopes of the Abajo Mountains. We enjoyed some great BBQ at Homestead Steak House – it turned out the people next to us were on a road trip to Breckenridge, CO to visit family – I imagine that probably a lot of people there might have been on road trips.

We stayed at the Four Corners Inn across the street – we were a bit tired and just wanted to stay somewhere, so instead of shopping around, we walked across to ask room rates. The rates were reasonable so we stayed – though we got to listen to some interesting stories from the owner – his father at 98 years was the oldest man in Blanding, and when he was in school, 80 percent of the students were all blood related! If his dad had 7 wives, it would have been easy to populate a small town in just a few generations!

## Day 6

We enjoyed a nice free continental breakfast, complete with coffee, donuts, and more stories. A couple others were there, also on road trips to the Four Corners area. I guess in a town where the nearest airport was probably 5-6 hours away, most visitors are probably on big road trips.

Back on the road, this time heading on 95 west toward Natural Bridges, we passed another Indian ruin. The Mule Canyon ruin just along the road was another ancient Pueblo Indian ruin complete with kivas, lookout tower, and block of rooms. Apparently the kiva was used for religious ceremonies – access was only through tunnels and shafts with ladders. The lookout tower was supposedly high enough to see another tower a couple miles away at another settlement – there might have actually been a network of settlements and they could communicate with the lookout towers.



Just a little further was Natural Bridges National Monument – where changes in the flow of the river had left “fossilized meanders” and dug new pathways in the rock, forming natural bridges. These bridges are not arches since arches were formed very differently. After seeing a pretty informative video on the formation of the bridges, we went to visit a few. Sipapu Bridge, at 268 feet across is one of the largest in the world. Sipapu is a Hopi term for the opening between worlds. A steep trail took us to the bottom, where we passed a couple granaries under a large overhang on the way.

I tried to imagine the force of the flow of the water – it must have taken an immense deluge of water to carve these huge openings from the solid rock. Soon afterward, I spotted a tree with debris stacked probably 15 feet up on the trunk and wrapped all the way around! I imagine that would not be a place to go during a flood! We made our way back up the 4 ladders and staircases back to the rim – a short but strenuous hike climbing 500 feet back to the rim.

A little farther down the road, we took the trail to the Horsecollar Ruins overlook – a nice set of well-preserved granaries was sheltered under an overhang overlooking the river. I was hoping to be able to visit the ruins, but we would have to hike from the river from the base of Sipapu Bridge, tacking on another 2-3 miles. Oh well – maybe next time... Just past the Horsecollar Ruins trail was the overlook to Kachina Bridge – the “Middle Bridge” in Hopi.

The last one was the Owachomo Bridge, meaning “Rock Mound” named after the mound on one end

of the bridge. The trail to the base was pretty short, so we took a look. A span of “only” 180 feet – it is the shortest in the park. It was fascinating to see how the river had carved such an artwork of natural scenery – it would be hard to argue that it all happened by chance!



After enjoying lunch back at the visitor center, we headed back on the main road and headed south on 261. I remember seeing signs a ways back that this road wasn't suited for RV's and trucks, but didn't think much of it as we drove the long straight road through the flat forested terrain. However, soon afterward we saw a warning sign that “steep grades of up to 10% for 3 miles” were coming. I knew we had to drop in elevation sometime between Natural Bridges and Monument Valley, but didn't know how or where. The suddenly the road reached the rim of the canyon and the road dropped 1100 feet vertically in about as many feet horizontally through a mazy set of switchbacks! It reminded me of when you are waiting for something for a long time, and when you have almost forgotten about it, it happens suddenly.

We reached what was called the Mokee Dugway, where the road changed to gravel and we soon forgot we were even on a main highway! I had seen postcards of the Mokee Dugway, but didn't think we were going there – it actually turned out that we were going right through it! It was an amazing tribute to the hard work it would have taken to build a route down to the canyon floor below.

Soon afterward, we reached the loop drive through the Valley of the Gods – a 16 mile loop which took us through a series of buttes that had so many human resemblances – some looked like giant faces, some like men standing and ruling over the desert, some like brides with large flowing dresses. The drive was a bit interesting as we carefully negotiated the ruts and potholes and washouts in the road – a Camry probably isn't the ideal vehicle for such a drive, but Yong Hong expertly guided the car around each obstacle! The sky had cleared to a brilliant blue again – it had been a bit cloudy earlier in the day and yesterday afternoon. It was nice for the weather to cooperate perfectly when we wanted it to be clear! The red rocks and deep azure blue sky complemented each other nicely as many megabytes of SD and CF memory were being burned.

Just a little further west was Goosenecks State Park – quite a unique location where the San Juan River makes 4 quick meanders that all visible from 1 point. Lots of rivers make many quick meanders, but not many make meanders like that going through 1000-foot deep canyons. Apparently the river was once just meandering on a flat plain and the meanders were preserved as the rock was uplifted and the river kept its course. How else would such deep meanders be formed?



South in highway 163, we saw in the distance what appeared to be a small balancing rock, and about 10 miles later in the map was a town called Mexican Hat. Actually the rock was not that small – it was also 10 miles away, and when we got there, we realized it was probably 40 or 50 feet across and balancing on a column just a few



feet wide. I could see how it was famous enough for an entire town to be named after it!

We were on the famous stretch of highway 163 that shows up on postcards – the straight road

toward a metropolis of rock towers. Sitting right at the border of UT and AZ, the valley in on Navajo land and considered a Navajo nation park (not national park – so no free pass with my national parks pass!) It was getting late so we only had time for a short visit. We checked in the visitor center and they tried to get us on a tour where they would drive us around for a couple hours and tell us about the formations. Sounded nice enough but probably not worth the \$50 per person they were charging. I wonder if I should try to get a job as a tour guide!

In the visitor center seemed like a museum of Navajo crafts, jewelry and rugs. I thought a bit about maybe getting a rug – I had bought a nice rug in Bangalore in India for about 9000 rupees (about \$200). In the shop here in this part of Indian country (Navajo, that is), I saw a rug about the same size as the one I got in the other part of Indian country (India, that is) also with a price tag of 9000. Numerically the same price... oh, yes, but we're in America now. I quietly put the rug back and bought a postcard instead.

The monuments were so majestic – much bigger and grander than those in the Valley of the Gods. The first few we saw were the West and East Mittens, Merrick Butte, and the Three Sisters. Down the road were dozens more, and if we had done the tour we could have visited the network of buttes containing mazes of canyons and arches. Maybe the \$50 would have been worth it – but we'd have to save that for another day. It was still great to appreciate these grand works of creation up close. The 1000-foot high West and East Mittens appeared as a set of great hands raised to heaven in eternal praise to a great God above.

A narrow crescent moon and bright Venus shone brilliantly in the sky as we continued south and west toward Page. Gradually more stars came out one by one and soon afterward the sky was filled with the glow of the Milky Way – the desert sky at 5000 feet is magnificent. I just wish we had a telescope and we could pull out and take a look.



The town of Page was coming into view even from 20 miles away as the lights from the giant dam and power plant with its towering smokestacks neared. The Glen Canyon dam is one of the largest in the world and the plant generates more than 1.3 million kilowatts of electricity with each of the 40-ton steel shafts turning at 150 rpm, generating nearly 200,000 horsepower. The dam has 5 million cubic yards of concrete and was completed in 1966. The resulting lake – Lake Powell is so large it took 17 years for it to fill the first time!

Thanks Haixia for picking a nice hotel in Page – we stayed at the Best Western right near the edge of the lake – you could see the dam, bridge, and lake all while swimming in the heated pool and soaking in the hot tub! Plus they had free breakfast in the morning!

**Day 7**

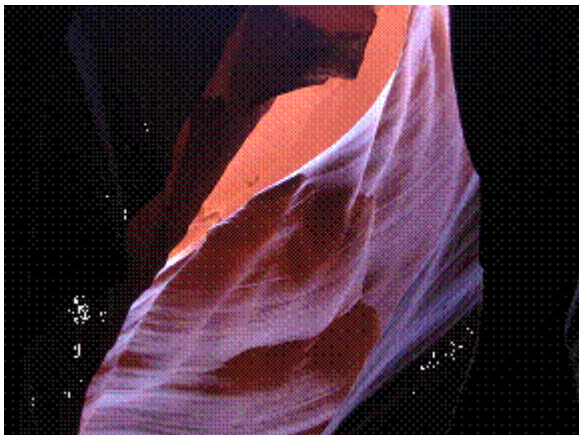
Since we were only a mile or so from the dam, we decided to pay at least a short visit to this masterpiece of engineering. The brilliant white concrete dam filling the red-walled canyon and deep blue lake Powell behind was like a postcard. The weekend balloon regatta in Page was just starting too – multicolored balloons filled the azure morning sky – some with Navajo patterns, some shaped like cartoon characters and some with elegant zigzag patterns.

We got into the visitor center of the dam, and immediately we noticed if you thought airport security was strict, the security at the dam was probably twice as much! I guess if a terrorist was going to attack the dam, the devastation would be immense with not only the loss of power to millions, but a 500-foot flood would rapidly start whooshing down the canyon!

We had a 9:30 reservation to tour the upper Antelope Canyon with Antelope Canyon Tours. This was one of the parts of the trip I was looking most forward to – I had heard of this canyon for many years and seen it in so many photo galleries. I always wondered if the photos had been enhanced to make them come out so brilliant. I was soon to be blown away by the colors and graceful curves of the smooth canyon walls.

It was a fun though a bit bumpy ride down the dirt road in the wash outside the canyon. The people next to us in the back of the open-air bus were actually on a yearlong road trip, touring all around the country! We have already gotten to see so many great places in just a few days and we always wished we had more time to really enjoy them. It would be awesome to have a whole year to take as much time as you wanted! Maybe when I'm retired I'll be able to do that too someday. They were headed the opposite direction as us – planning on visiting Monument Valley and going up north afterward.

As we neared the canyon, we continued through a rather uninteresting dry wash, when all of the sudden we came to the end and there was a tall cliff in front of us containing a narrow winding crack. It reminded me of heading toward Dead Horse Point – you would have no idea of the wonders in front of you until you are there. We just had an hour to tour the canyon – I had my tripod all set and the camera settings all ready – didn't want to waste any time. The charger was working last night – I made sure it was charging even with the lights off...



The canyon was like a musical masterpiece – different melodies ringing with the curves and shapes of the winding corkscrew canyon. Some curves looked like faces, some like the figure of a lady, some like a “weeping eye”. Some golden stretches were like majestic brass, some graceful sandstone bands like mellow strings in a visual orchestra. Your imagination could easily run wild as you traverse each bend to see what lay hidden beyond.

We were lucky with the weather – bright and sunny to bring out the best colors. It would be nice to come back in the summer when sunbeams can come all the way in and hit the floor, but the sun came in far enough to bring a nice range of colors. Some parts of the canyon were bright and golden and some were so dark it was like a cave – you'd need a flashlight! We were glad there were no storms or threats of flash floods. A few years ago a flood from miles upstream washed through the canyon – several people were killed when a 50-foot wall of water came racing through the narrows. And it

wasn't even raining near the canyon – the tourists had no idea what was coming! They said the canyon got 4 feet deeper in that flood. Every so often there were reminders of these floods – logs and debris were wedged in some of the tight parts far above our heads.

Many megabytes got burned in the last hour – we would have to spend extra time tonight going through and filtering pictures, since now our memory cards were getting low. And there were still 2 days to go! Back at our cars, we picked up some goodies for the road and checked our tires. We had already driven 1500 miles on this trip with a nail in the left front tire (though Yong Hong had been driving many more thousands of miles with that same nail and the tire has been fine). As long as it stayed in there good and tight, we should be fine. However, with all the miles of bumpy dirt roads yesterday, that tire had lost 1/3 of its pressure and started going flat. Fortunately after a quick pump, it stayed full and we were ready to go again.

Back on highway 89 west over Marble canyon, we marveled at the engineering of the twin bridges over the deep canyon which marks the official beginning of the Grand Canyon. I wondered why 2 bridges were built – one is the main road bridge but the narrower one is just a footbridge right now. I didn't mind having the extra bridge to walk – it was a great spot to look down at the swift muddy Colorado River at the bottom. We paid some of the Navajo vendors a brief visit – they were selling the usual items – jewelry, small vases, ornaments and other trinkets. Even though many vendors said they hand-made them, they were almost all the same – it seemed like it was a fairly commercialized business. I still felt I should honor the tribe – so I bought a small token of a reminder of visiting the great land on which the Navajo called their home.

Just a little further on 89 were the colorful sandstone Vermillion cliffs containing some beautiful geology. The cliffs were gorgeous, and interestingly, some settlers had built shelters under some large sculpted mushroom-shaped rocks. Several Navajo houses called hogans made of sticks also dotted some of the plains around the canyons.

We decided to aim for lunch at Fredonia – the next town on the map. As we neared the town, we climbed up to the rim of the Kaibab plateau (the same level as the north rim of the Grand Canyon). We left the desert and entered a beautiful lush pine forest at 8000 feet – it was like really being in the mountains. We were actually lucky the road was still open – snow was only a couple weeks away. After reaching the town and only finding a single gas station (with 3.73 for the cheapest gas) and no McDonalds or other fast food, we were a bit dismayed. Oh well – just 30 miles to the next town.



We had originally planned to go south and visit the north rim of the Grand Canyon – there was about a 40-mile spur road, but in the last couple days we decided to visit Zion instead. We had all been to the Grand Canyon and were looking forward to seeing Zion. On the way, we spotted a sign to Moqui Cave (also spelled Mokee Cave, like in Mokee Dugway). The 200-foot deep cave is a museum of artifacts from the ancient Puebloan tribes in the area.

It was just a few more miles to Zion National Park – just past the east entrance is Checkerboard Mesa. The white cross-bedded sandstone in the mesa was formed from fossilized sand dunes and vertical lines developed from water run-off, forming an elegant



checkerboard pattern. Actually many of the mesas in the east part of the park were “checkerboard mesas”. The afternoon light brought out the texture so elegantly, it would be fun to spend hours running around the mesas.

The road winded through one of the deepest tunnels in the world – a 6000-foot tunnel built in the 20’s was cut through the solid sandstone. The rock is so solid, no concrete supports or braces are required and the banded layers in the rock are neatly visible as you drive through. On the other side of the tunnel, you come out in the middle of the canyon formed from the Virgin River.

The leaves were displaying their full color when we got into the park. Even though we didn’t have a lot of time, we still got to enjoy the hike up the lower and middle Emerald Pools. Apparently, a lot other people had the same idea – even though it was off-season and a weekday, the parking lot was nearly full. The fall colors were spectacular all along the trail, with the cottonwoods in brilliant yellow by the river, oaks and maples turning bright orange, pink and red up on the hillsides. The lower Emerald Pool lies at the base of a waterfall with a deep grotto behind. The trail goes behind the falls and the red rock at the back of the grotto is banded with all different colored mineral deposits.

We did a short driving tour through the park – seeing the Court of the Patriarchs, a set of huge sandstone towers, the Sentinel, Angel’s Landing where the river makes a sweeping horseshoe bend, and the entrance of the Narrows. I’d love to spend a week in the park and really see those places in depth sometime. We had a fortunate visit by some wildlife – a bighorn sheep was grazing on one of the cliff sides, showing his expert footing. On our way out of the park, a traffic jam formed when a group of mule deer was seen grazing just a few feet from the road!

Back on I-15 south, we headed toward Las Vegas. Another picturesque desert sunset started to fade as we headed back on the freeway, and a couple hours later, the dazzling lights of Las Vegas lit up the horizon. I could see the Stratosphere tower and thought we just had a few miles to go. My stomach was rumbling that it was time for dinner, and Yong Hong was eager to press his luck a bit. However, distances deceived us, and the tower was actually more like 25 miles away!

We finally reached the strip and checked into a hotel. Unfortunately, our first choice only had smoking rooms left (Haixia and I said no way to that), and many other hotels were already booked. It was Friday night, one of the prime nights to be out! It was a bit of shock, being out in the desert during the midweek and seeing almost nobody, and then all of the sudden reaching the city during the weekend! Fortunately, the Greek Isles Casino was just across the street and they were one of the few to still have rooms.



After a nice Greek dinner at the resort and being entertained a bit with a performance from a Japanese “Elvis”, we walked off the extra calories down the Vegas strip. Even though we were off the main strip a bit, I didn’t mind walking a little extra and seeing the sights – the pirate show at Treasure Island, the volcano at the Mirage, the musical fountain at the Bellagio, and the Romanesque architecture at Caesar’s Palace. A couple monster trucks revving their engines caught our attention – that’s what we needed to drive the road up Elephant Hill in Canyonlands! As if we hadn’t seen enough arches yet, we had to visit the Arch de Triomphe at





Paris framed by a set of graceful arching water fountains.

We made the mistake of hitting the quarter slots in the very front at Caesar's Palace – fortunately, we learned quickly, and moved across the street to Harrah's where they

advertised having "loose slots". The ones at Caesar's were rather "tight" indeed, tightly holding your money. After a nice modest jackpot (150 nickels), I decided to call it a night, tightly holding my own money. The obsession took over Yong Hong – I don't think he stumbled back in until after 12:30, long after I was asleep. At least with nickels, you can't lose too much...

## Day 8

I felt like we were really on our way home now from our road trip as we passed back into California. Crossing the ridge west of Las Vegas into the Joshua tree filled Pahrump valley, we made our way down into Death Valley. I had been there twice, but it was Yong Hong and Haixia's first time. Actually in a way it was mine too, since in my previous trips, we spent more time in the backcountry and missing the main tourist sites.

Badwater at 280 feet below sea level is the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere, and this time of year, it was just an incredible flat, dazzling white salt plain – similar to the Bonneville Salt Flats, but even purer white. Apparently just a few months ago, since it was a record wet spring, people were kayaking across a 3-foot deep lake at Badwater!



Just a little farther to the right was a canyon leading to an elegant natural bridge. Though not as grand as the 268-foot Sipapu Bridge, it was in an interesting narrow desert wash canyon overlooking the salt plains at Badwater. Numerous flash floods had weathered the walls, sculpting them into many smooth curves.

Devil's Golf Course was probably the most tortured landscape I had ever seen – consisting of miles and miles of extremely sharp and

rugged salt mounds about 3 feet high, it would be a heck of a place to lose a golf ball! The golf course at Furnace Creek just a few miles away with its green lawns would be far more pleasant. However, Devil's Golf Course was much more interesting – the salt made every conceivable formation, creating vase-shaped cups, deep holes, and even arches.

Scenic drives through the multicolored rocks at Artist's Palette and up to the badlands and viewpoint at Zabriskie point shattered the preconception that Death Valley was just boring sandy desert. It was anything but boring! The stories of the history of Death Valley were anything but boring too – the ranger had a ball telling about some of the early explorers during the gold rush era trying to reach the "promised land" of gold. They were just 3 mountain ranges off course... sadly enough they had to resort to eating whatever they could scrounge in the desert, eventually even their own horses! With only minimal supplies on their back, a couple explorers were lucky enough to meet others on another trail and survive, so they lived to tell the story.



On our way out, we were just going to play in the sand dunes a little. However, on our trip, with words “play” and “little” don’t go together... “playing a little” on the slots was 3 hours (not 20-30 minutes), and “playing a little” on the sand dunes was over an hour (we planned to stay maybe 10-15 minutes or so). It was well worth it, though, as the afternoon sun cast eerie shadows over the 100-foot high rippled dunes at Mesquite Flat.

We paused for a short visit to Mosaic Canyon on the way out – as with the canyon at Natural Bridge, it was humbling to think of the force of the water flowing down from the flash floods. Mud was spattered on the walls 20 or 30 feet above our heads, and the rocks embedded in the walls had been polished perfectly smooth by the force of the raging waters. Even the trail which once required that you climb a ladder had been completely eroded and a new path around the corner had formed. Only small remnants of the metal rungs of the ladder still remained.

As we headed out of Death Valley, it looked like we were just on a long, flat, straight road. We were actually climbing, though ever so slowly and continuously for such a long time, that when my ears popped and we passed a sign saying Elevation 4000 feet did I realize how much we had really climbed! After crossing the pass over the Inyo Mountains with the last of the Joshua trees silhouetting the setting sun, we headed down into the Owens Valley. We could just make out the shape of Mt Whitney straight in front of us in the fading light. Mt Whitney is the rightmost of a set of spires, reaching 14494 feet, the highest point in the continental US – we were just at the lowest spot a few hours ago at 280 feet below sea level.

We were able to reach Bishop where we enjoyed a quick meal, and then we headed on to Mammoth. I called about the road condition at Yosemite about getting over the Tioga Pass, and they said it was still open. I knew it would be a bit iffy since it was already November – in fact they were forecasting snow tomorrow night! We enjoyed a cheap room at the Econolodge in Mammoth - \$40 for room, hot tub, and free breakfast on a Saturday night – hard to beat that!

## **Day 9**

Alas, today was our last day of the trip. Part of me wished we could just spend as much time as we wanted, visiting all different places – like that couple we met in Page on a year-long trip, but part of me was ready to be back home, getting back to normal. We still had one more day to enjoy, but still lots of great stuff!

We checked out after enjoying a hearty continental breakfast. The granite massifs of the Minarets were already covered with the first dustings of snow for the winter. The view of the East Sierra was grand everywhere as we headed north toward Mono Lake. This is one of my favorite areas in CA – the great scenery, mountains, and hot springs! It was a tough decision to vote down a visit to one of the many hot springs, but we had already enjoyed one in UT (and some of our clothes still smelled a bit of sulfur!). Plus, we were close enough to the bay area we could go back there on a regular weekend.

We visited the picturesque tufa formations on south shore of Mono Lake, which were formed from mineral deposits from springs underneath the surface of Mono Lake. Consisting of calcium carbonate

deposits, the towers have formed into all strange shapes, like the salt mounds at Devil's Golf Course. The glassy Mono Lake was like a mirror reflecting the strange shapes as well as the majestic snow-capped Sierra in the background. Some of the towers reach 25-30 feet high, though many will soon be submerged soon again as the lake is rising. I was there last year, and it looks like the lake had already risen a bit since last time.

We were thinking about the strange shapes – might there be arches here too? We reflected on how many different types of arches we saw see on our trip – sandstone arches, natural bridges, salt arches in Devil's Golf Course, arches in Paris (Arch de Triomphe and the arched fountains), rock cairn arches, and even the arches in the hotel balcony alcoves. Our answer was soon found to be yes – in fact some of the tufa towers contained several arches!



On 120 west through Yosemite, we were almost home. I got to exercise my parks pass yet again – it was getting quite a workout! We reached the Tioga Pass near 10000 feet among the alpine lakes and snowy peaks and meadows. We opted for at least a short hike in the park and decided to head up to the High Sierra Mine. Although it was only a little over a mile to the mine, it took a bit of huffing and puffing with the altitude!

We had just gotten on the trail and I heard a jingle coming from Yong Hong – he had dropped a couple coins. I wondered how that could have happened – maybe the altitude was getting to him? Soon afterward another jingle happened and his car keys were on the ground! Lucky that we noticed them, or else it would be interesting trying to get home!

Passing the snowy meadows surrounding the lower Gaylor Lake, we headed up toward the upper lake. I wasn't sure if we would be able to make it through Yosemite this time of year, but was glad to find out it was still open. The 3 inches or so of snow made for a beautiful wintry scene while not hindering the hiking too much. I was on my last couple pictures in my memory card and tried to conserve memory, but the beautiful scenery made me think otherwise. We reached the mine near 11000 feet tucked back in the mountains surrounded by pristine lakes. What a view, but it must have been a harsh life being a miner with the extreme altitude, cold, wind, and blaring sun.



Back on the Tioga Road through the park, we made a brief visit to Tenaya Lake and Olmstead point, our last scenic spot before heading back. The timing was impeccable – I couldn't think of any more pictures to delete, and when I took my last picture, my camera beeped saying the memory was full! Our timing with the weather was also impeccable – during our hike the skies were clear, but as we headed out, the beginnings of a winter storm were

coming up and a few clouds were already forming. They were predicting up to 2 feet of snow tonight and tomorrow. In fact, when I checked the road condition the next day, the road was already closed! I was so glad Yong Hong found his car keys! We couldn't have timed it any better. In the beginning of the trip, the only day it really rained was the first day, which was mostly a driving day anyway. Every other day when we were out it was nice!

Back on 120, toward 205 and 580, back across San Mateo Bridge, down 101 and back home! A great trip indeed!



Miles hiked:

Day 1 – none

Day 2 – 2.5 each way to hot spring = 5.0

Day 3 – .3 at Balanced Rock, .5 at Cove of Caves, .4 at Double Arch, 1.0 at the Windows, 3.0 at Delicate Arch, 4.0 at Devil's Garden, .3 at Sand Dune Arch = 9.5

Day 4 - .2 at Dead Horse Point, .5 at Mesa Arch, 2.0 at Aztec Butte, 1.8 at Upheaval Dome, 3 on Gooseberry trail = 7.5

Day 5 - .3 at Wilson Arch, .3 at Roadside Ruin, .6 at Cave Spring, 3.0 at Elephant Hill, .6 at pothole point = 4.8

Day 6 – 1.2 at Sipapu Bridge, .5 at Owachomo Bridge, .5 at Horsecollar Ruin = 2.2

Day 7 - .5 at Antelope Canyon, 2.0 to Emerald Pools, 3.0 in Las Vegas strip = 5.5

Day 8 - .6 at Badwater, 1.0 at Natural Bridge, 1.0 at Sand Dunes, .4 at Mosaic Canyon = 3.0

Day 9 – 2.5 at Gaylor Lakes = 2.5

Total = 40 mi

An online photo album can be found at <http://community.webshots.com/user/mattshots> under the albums "Road Trip part I" and "Road Trip part II".