

Subject: Pony Express, Jesse James, and Lewis and Clark trivia.

Date: Thu, 28 Oct 1999 22:53:26

We got up late this morning and headed into Saint Joseph MO and made our way to the Pony Express Stables. The Pony Express only lasted 19 months before the telegraph line put it out of business. Even at the cost of \$5 for a half ounce letter the Pony Express could not pay for itself. It needed the one million dollar US government mail contract to subsidize the operation. Prior to the Pony Express there were only a few routes for the mail. Steamships either around Cape Horn (3 months) or to Panama and across the land and back to steamers up the west coast (4 weeks) or one of the two stage coach routes a southern route via El Paso(21-23 days) or a central route.

California was screaming for better communications with the west and with the civil war becoming a concern the southern route fell under control of the Confederates and the central route was controlled by the Union. The Pony Express was a private venture that promised a ten day trip. Without the million dollar government contract they couldn't survive and the completed telegraph line it completely killed the need for the "quick" mail service. In 19 months it was over and the owners in receivership.

It did have a colorful history and many interesting stories.

The Pony Express had set up over 160 stations across the route for riders and horses. Over 400 horses were used in the Pony Express. Most of the stations were relay stations where the Pony Express driver had two minutes to change horses before galloping off to the next station. The mail was carried in a mochila (Spanish for knapsack) which fit over a saddle. Each mochila could hold about 20 pounds of mail. The mochila was transferred from one saddle to the next at every stop over the 2000 mile route. Riders ages ranged from eleven to those in their 40s they were expected to ride for eight to ten hours at a time with only a few minutes rest at the relay stations. The relay stations were spaced nine to fifteen miles apart and the relay rider was expected to ride until the next home station where riders would switch. The home stations were 75 to 100 miles apart an estimated 10 to 12 hour trip. Once there, the rider would wait for the next mail run going the opposite way.

The rider had a tough life glimpsed at in the employment ad: *Wanted young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18, must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily, **ORPHANS PREFERRED** Wages \$25 per week*

Buffalo Bill Cody rode for the Pony Express in Nebraska. The last rider died in 1955 at the age of 105.

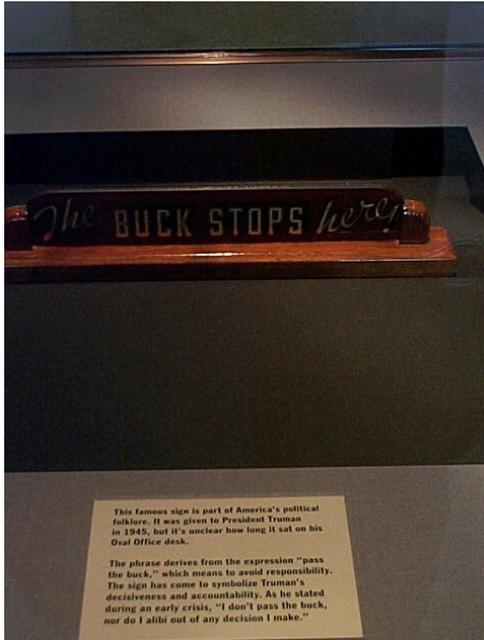
By the mid-November 1861 when the last mochila reached Sacramento the pony express had transferred approximately 35,000 letters the 2000 miles across the country.

Saint Joseph was also the place where Jesse James was shot and killed. The story goes that the Jesse and a couple of guys, Bob Ford and Charles Ford, were planning a bank robbery when Jesse notice a needle point that was hanging on the wall was crooked and he took off his gun belt so the neighbors wouldn't see it and climbed up on a chair to straighten it. Bob Ford shot him with his back turned. He hit him behind the left ear and the bullet exited and put a hole in the wall. The bullet hole in the wall is still there although enlarged over the years by souvenir hunters.

We left the Jesse James Museum and headed up the road to a Quicklube for Millie's second 5000 km

oil change this month, then headed to Louis and Clark State Park. We arrived and settled in by walking around the area. They had a few plaques that talked about the explorers. One of the neat little pieces of trivia about Lewis: he took a Newfoundland dog with him for the entire trip its name was Seaman.

Subject: Truman Library and the Cosmosphere.
Date: Sun, 31 Oct 1999 22:32:38



Harry S. Truman had a keen interest in history and he worked with the archives to preserve many of the papers and artifacts from his presidency. It was very well done and we really enjoyed the time we spent in the gallery.

The "The buck stops here" plaque from his desk is on display. It was neat to see that part of the legend was accurate. What did the back of the sign say? "I'm from Missouri"

They have a reconstructed Oval Office which you can go into, it was interesting. The Whitehouse was practically falling down during his term and for a while he was quite sure the place was haunted. The knocking on the bedroom door turned out to be the cracking joists and it was time for repair. He moved across the street while the Whitehouse was renovated.

The museum has a lot of artifacts relating to General George C. Marshall. The Marshall plan rebuilt much of Europe after the war and the effort is well recorded in the museum. It includes a number of interesting artifacts including the Nobel Prize he was awarded.

There are many artifacts and items on display one was a set of navigation instruments from the HMS Resolute. The Resolute was one of the famous ships used to search for Sir John Franklin's expedition to find the northwest passage. The Resolute got caught in the ice in Hudson's Bay and while three other vessels were crushed and sunk the Resolute drifted with the ice for 16 months before being found and salvaged by an American company. The American Government refurbished the ship and in 1856 gave the ship back to the British as a show of friendship. As a return gesture in 1880 a desk made from the timbers of the Resolute was given to the president. This is one of the most famous desks in the Whitehouse and is currently being used by Bill Clinton in the oval office.

After leaving Independence Mo, we wanted to get out of town before rush hour hit and that meant traveling through both Kansas City Mo. and Kansas City, Kansas. We made it to Milford State Park before we got ourselves into too much trouble and then went for a walk around the park. Lakes and sailboats aren't one of the things that pop to mind when I think of Kansas but a local



yacht club rents land from the park and has quite a few sailboats, mostly Hunters, but an Island Packet (with windvane) called Sojourner and a little blue hulled boat named "Sea Sharp".

The next day we made it out of the park early more due to the time change than our quick action. We did get patrolled quite regularly by the park rangers during the small part of the night we remember (we were in bed REAL early). They seem to be nervous about Halloween Night.

We found a place to stay in Hutchinson and then backtracked to the Cosmosphere. What a place, all kinds of really neat artifacts from the space race and the cold war. Another SR71 (we have now seen 2 of the 29 made), a full scale mockup of space shuttle Endeavour, and many real objects that had flown in space or were flight ready backups to the satellites or capsules that did.



A Nazi V1 Rocket on display

The exhibits included quite a bit of interesting stuff from the Apollo missions. One tidbit that I thought was cute. One of the crewmen on Apollo 17 accidentally broke the fender of the lunar rover with a hammer and they had to repair it. The guys on earth sent up instructions for repair and out they went with four maps, a clamp and DUCT TAPE. Or as Red Green would say "God on a roll"

Michael Collis, stayed in the ACM while Apollo 11's Eagle visited the moon, he was as alone as you could get. He would spend 48 minutes in radio blackout behind the moon on every orbit. He wrote "I am alone now, and absolutely isolated from any known life. I am it. If a count were taken, the score would be three billion plus two on the other side of the Moon, and one plus God knows what on this side ... I like this feeling."



One of five of these spheres was the first man made object on the moon

They have a V1 Buzz Bomb and a V2 Rocket on exhibit. They were designed by von Braun who gathered up as many scientists as possible and surrendered at once to the US "take me to Ike" They had also collect a large volume of documents and plans for the V2. von Braun was instrumental in the later race to the moon.

They present a really good exhibit on the space race including the artifacts used in the race. As an example they have a Sputnik I on display, the backup unit obtained from the Russian manufacturer that built the original. A vanguard satellite that was scheduled to go up but was canceled.

They have one of the five stainless steel spheres that the Russians constructed to be the first man made object to land

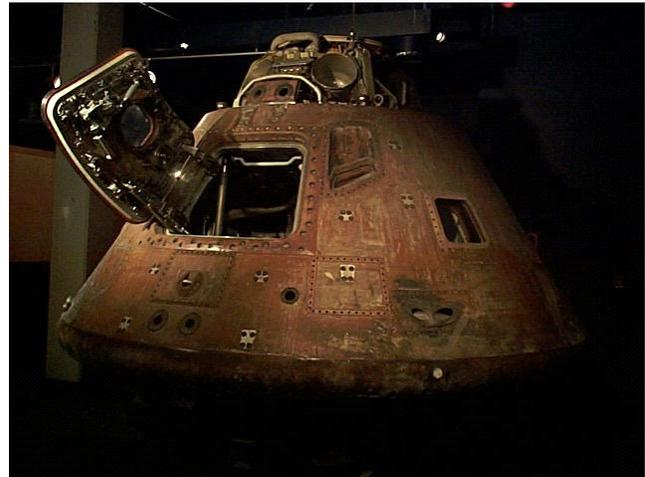
on the moon. One missed the moon, one hit, one is missing, and two ended up at the Eisenhower Presidential Library.

Kennedy's memorandum to his Vice President (as Chairman of the Space Council) wrote:

Do we have a chance of beating the Soviets by putting a laboratory in space, or by a trip around the moon, or by a rocket to land on the moon, or by a rocket to go to the moon and back with a man. Is there any other space program which promises dramatic results in which we could win?

LBJ replied "Man to the Moon"

One of the neat things they have is a Vostok. One of the capsules like the one which launched Yuri Gagarin into history as the first man in space. It was interesting to note that Vostok 6 was piloted by the first female in space Valentina Tereshkova. The Vostok they have on display shows heat marks from reentry and looks like a very uncomfortable place to be couped up in too long. One thing was the cosmonauts didn't land with their reentry vehicle. They were ejected out at over 20,000 feet and landed with their own parachute.



They have lots and lots of neat stuff but the absolute number one thing for me was the Odyssey. The ill fated Apollo 13 command module. Wow neat stuff.

Subject: Fort Larned and Dodge City.
Date: Tue, 02 Nov 1999 20:57:39



Fort Larned operating room ready to go

Fort Larned was built to defend the Santa Fe Trail. The Fort was an outpost who saw service from Custer and the 7th Cavalry as well as the 10th Cavalry also known as the Buffalo Soldiers. The black soldiers quickly distinguished themselves as a courageous and professional fighting force respected by both the white soldiers and the Indians.

The fort was sold shortly after the completion of the railroad across the plains. While in public hands the fort sandstone walls were carved with names of visitors to the fort.

The Parks service bought it in 1964 and started restoring it. They have done a very good job with the barracks, hospital, bakery, and the commissary. The barracks are very complete with bedding,

rifles, and uniforms. The hospital complete with operating table and sickrooms are frighteningly realistic. We got a kick out of the commissary, the stocks and supplies were interesting. Beer and pineapples were behind lock and key, there were crates of Army bread from Baltimore MD and Lea and Perrins sauce. Maybe with all of the Salt Pork, Cod, and Beef, the Lea and Perrins sauce makes sense.

Inside the Officers Quarters we found a couple of surprises. Bonnie's small child's rocking chair was there, as well as a duplicate of a family bible that I have.

From Fort Larned we ended up moving on to Dodge City and relaxed for a while.

The next stop was at a scenic overlook of the cattle yards. Ok, it wasn't my idea of a great view at first, but the sight of 20,000 head of cattle is fairly impressive. Dodge City was the end point for cattle drives from Texas and it brought lots of Texas Cowboys, with money to spend after the sale of the cattle, together with card sharks, soiled doves, and barrels of whiskey. Which brings us to the next stop on our tour of Dodge City, the Boot Hill Museum.

They have a block of restored houses on the Front Street and the top corner of the area is what is left of Boot Hill. Boot Hill got its name from the people who were buried with their boots on or holding up their heads. There are no bodies left on Boot Hill. Those that weren't dug up by wolves shortly after their death were moved when the city dug up the hill for a new swimming pool in 1916.

Dodge City became one of the sites for the buffalo hunters. The government encouraged the buffalo hunters to wipe out the buffalo. General Sheraton said the buffalo hunters did more to settle the vexed indian question than 30 years of the army. Before the hunters there was an estimated 30 million buffalo, by 1889 there were less than 600, and by 1972 there was an estimated 30,100.

The Museum has an extensive collection of rifles and revolvers including a Sharps model 1852 .50 caliber. The Sharps was incredibly accurate for it's time and even today if you are considered a skilled marksman you are often called a "sharpshooter". Many of the rifles date back to the civil war and the era of Dodge City's wilder times including guns owned by Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp.

The buffalo hunters were only after the hides, very little of the meat was ever used. Records show that in the period 1872 to 1874 3,158,370 hides were shipped from Dodge but only 1.5 million pounds of meat. Less than a half pound per animal on average. A large buffalo can weigh 2000 pounds. The bones were later shipped out for commercial use and made into things like buttons, toothbrush handles and bone china. The buffalo hides were used as belts to propel the factories of the industrial age.

After the buffalo were gone, Texas started running cattle north to the railway line that ran through Dodge City and this was a time when Dodge City gained it's wild west reputation. While Hollywood's Matt Dillon never existed, Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson did. Stuff of legend.

About the time that Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson had Dodge City calmed down, a quarantine of Texas ended the cattle drive and Dodge City switched to farming.

Tomorrow we head into Colorado. We have a route planned that takes us through one of the southern passes and by the sound of the weather we should be have good weather for the trip. We'll need it, the highest pass on this route is well over 10,000 feet. We chose this route because it is the lowest of the bunch. If weather won't let us pass, we have a backup plan heading into New Mexico. But we do have to get to Durango before the beginning of next week, mail will be waiting.

Subject: The Santa Fe Trail and The Great Sand Dunes National Monument.
Date: Sat, 06 Nov 1999 08:00:53

The Santa Fe Trail is one of the many famous wagon trails across the US west. This one went from Franklin Missouri to Santa Fe. Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821 and trade flourished between the Eastern States and Mexico. The Santa Fe Trail lasted 60 years despite conflicts with the plains indians and the Mexican American war (1846-48).

The caravans took 6 to 7 weeks to travel the 800 miles, averaging 12 to 15 miles a day. The hundreds of freight wagons traveled along a route sometimes miles wide and in other places extremely narrow often single file. These caravans rutted the ground and in some places it is still visible after over a hundred years.

Sometimes just depressions are visible and with the light just the right way you can see the trails in the waves of the prairies. In other places the trail is marked quite vividly. The caravans ended with the coming of the train.



The Santa Fe trail is still visible in places

We traveled along to the a Army Corp of Engineers park and talked to a Colorado person who was enroute to Florida for the winter. He had us pretty much convinced that we should probably head south to New Mexico to avoid the mountains of Colorado. To follow his route we had to do one 9400 foot pass and then head south toward Taos, and then across. We remapped our plans and searched for campsites and parks. We lucked into several days of warm and dry weather with a forecast for four more days of exceptionally hot and dry weather. It was cool at night sometimes high 20s F but we did see a couple of signs saying 82-85F. T-shirt weather in the afternoons for the last 4-5 days.

We altered plans to travel toward Walsenburg rather than Pueblo. This route took us via Route 10. This road was interesting by itself. Very straight for 73 miles, through desert and prairie that seem to stretch forever. Every once in a while we would come up on a rise and the view was breathtaking. We finally came to one rise and in the distance (over 40 miles away) were the Rocky Mountains. The mountains we were looking at are over 14,000 feet tall. We would lose them in the dips but every rise brought them closer. By 11:30 we were at our "stopping" place for the day. The weather forecast was perfect and pretty accurate from where we were. Rather than stop we pushed on and decided to go over the La Veta Pass at 9413 feet. Millie made it without a spit or sputter.

Bonnie wanted to go to the Great Sand Dunes National Monument (<http://www.nps.gov/grsa>). I had never heard of it but they have a campground and it was not far away in the San Luis Valley, so off we went. The San Luis Valley is interesting. It is a very flat plateau in the mountains. There are 9 mountains on the east side of the valley (which we saw over 40 miles away) that are over 14,000 feet. The campground at the park is just over 8,600 feet high. Anything over 8000 feet is altitude sickness territory. Other than a touch of a headache on my part we really didn't show any symptoms.

I was really impressed with the dunes. This isn't quite your average pile of sand. The highest peak is 750 feet tall and the dunes occupy an area of 39 square miles. From a distance they are hard to

describe. To really appreciate their size, shape, and beauty you have to walk on them. We climbed to about the 650 foot level but with the thin air and setting sun we decided to leave the summit for our next visit. We have been trying to get at least a half hour of exercise a day (usually walking). Climbing the equivalent of a 65 story building with a loose sand staircase qualified as our exercise for the day. We slept GREAT!

We arrived in the campground to watch the sunset on the dunes before having supper. We wanted to see the sunrise on the dunes so we went to bed early (good excuse eh!).

We did see the sun rise and change the dull gray sand to brilliant pinks and beige. The digital camera doesn't like cold weather. The previous night it was in the high 20s add a mile of altitude and the morning temperature was in the high teens. COLD. The sky was hazy but the roads were clear and not the least bit slippery.



To appreciate them, walk on them.

We decided to go direct to Durango rather than via New Mexico. The weather was holding and Millie did the first pass like a champ. So we headed for the Wolf Creek Pass(10,850 feet) almost 300 feet higher than 2 miles in the air. We made it up without a hitch, but I'm awful glad we were going east to west rather than west to east. Coming down was darn right scary in places. We traveled many miles in first gear and hoping the brakes and the transmission would hold. They did without a sign of a hesitation.

It was interesting to note that at the top of this pass was a sign for the Great Divide. On our way up we were passing the headwaters of the famous Rio Grande River, sometimes frighteningly close. The scenery up the pass was beautiful. On the way down Bonnie said the scenery was good too but all I saw was blacktop. There were stretches where you could see where you were going to be in a few minutes, a little lower than that you could see where you were going to be in a few minutes after that. Switchbacks were the 15 and 20 mph type, at least we were going down and not up.

We arrived in Durango and stopped for our mail pickup, it was waiting for us as usual. We did a little walk around Durango and it really looks like a neat place. Talking to an art gallery owner she really made Durango sound like a neat place to live and visit. Now that we have our avalanche of paperwork behind us we can spend tomorrow playing tourist.

Subject: Durango
Date: Sat, 06 Nov 1999 17:16:15

This morning was cool but this afternoon was HOT and dry. The sun seems intense here and if you are in the sun, it seems to dig right in. We bought another set of cinnamon buns at a local bakery and this morning was their trial. They didn't make our top three but they were a sweet treat. We were off to downtown and it was still early morning so we had a nice long day of window shopping and touring the town.

We happened to hit the down time between the summer and winter tourist seasons. So quite a few

things were closed. In particular the narrow gauge steam railroad that is rated in the top 10 scenic railways in the world, we were interested in a run but they are closed until Thanksgiving.

We did check out a couple of book store and found a magazine store that carried both Cruising World and Latitudes and Attitudes, Bonnie is happy now. Finding places that carry sailing magazines in the midwest is sometimes a little problematic. We should probably subscribe.

We were really impressed with the amount of really high quality art galleries carrying a wide variety of art including: jewelry (featuring turquoise and silver), sand paintings, bronzes, water color and oil paintings, and prints. We found one we really liked and we bought it. A small blonde haired girl in blue jeans walking a horse through the desert with mountains in the background.

Bonnie and I were quite impressed with Durango and added it to our list of places in the US where we would consider moving to if we had to move to the states. We really liked the CD store, the best selection of CDs we have found anywhere, including Natalie McMaster, Leonard Cohen, Jimmy Buffett, and Bob Marley, but no Chris deBurgh.

We have really enjoyed our visit to Colorado. We picked up a Colorado legend about another frequent visitor, Theodore Roosevelt. President Roosevelt used to come hunting and quite a few hotels have a "Roosevelt slept here" posted. Legend has it that the President was feeling down about his unsuccessful grizzly hunt and to cheer him up the hotel maids stitched up a toy stuffed bear to give to him, the first teddy bear.

Subject: Aztec Ruins and Mesa Verde

Date: Mon, 08 Nov 1999 21:50:01

After leaving Durango we nipped down to the Aztec Ruins in New Mexico and then back up to Colorado to Mesa Verde and after a day's travel ended we were 36 miles west of Durango.

The Aztec Ruins aren't Aztec in origin they are actually Anasazi or the currently politically correct version "ancestors of the Pueblo". The Anasazi built very complex structures and the Aztec Ruins has one of the few restored Grand Kivas. It seems a lot of the archeology has been rewritten in the last few years and what you read reflects some of the old thinking, some of the new and a whole bunch of "we really don't have a clue". What did the Anasazi use the Kiva for? Not sure, Ceremonial for sure, community meetings, crafts, and who knows what else. The Aztec Ruins shows influences from both the southern Chacoians and the northern Mesa Verdeians.

The Ruins had a number of very interesting features and showed many different levels of expertise in building including three corner doors (how many doors do you see today that go through the corner of the room) They also created Kivas circular pit buildings with ventilation shafts, fire pit, and roof supported well enough they could walk, dance and grind corn into



Ruins were bigger than we expected

flour on it. They also didn't have proper foundations and some walls were not interconnected well enough to keep them from splitting apart as the walls sifted from lack of foundations. On the other hand some of these buildings are well intact and have part walls reaching up two and three stories, after 800 years that's not too shabby.

Exploring the Aztec Ruins took so long that we didn't make it to Mesa Verde in time to see anything so we camped at a nearby campground and headed in first thing in the morning.

Mesa Verde is the home of some very impressive cliff dwellings. They were built between the 1190s and the late 1270s. They range in size from one room houses to villages of 200 rooms. Cliff Palace is probably one of the most famous and most photographed example of the 200 room village. Unfortunately we arrived too late and they have closed both Cliff Palace and Balcony House for the season. Spruce Tree House was still open and rangers were giving guided tours.



Cliff Palace, a 200 room village

Spruce Tree House was given its name by a couple of ranchers who climbed a "spruce tree" to explore the ruins. It was actually a Douglas Fir. The Spruce Tree House is built in a natural alcove in the sandstone cliff. It has 114 rooms and eight kivas built in the alcove that is 216 feet wide, and 89 feet deep. The walls were built mostly of sandstone. They were plastered and had wooden supports for verandahs and ceilings. They had to bring in large quantities of fill in order to have a place to build their structures and they had to tamp it down by hand. These structures were built at a time where they had no horses, no metal tools, and everything was done by human hands. These structures have existed for over 700 years, and have settled some, about an inch and a half.

They have a completed kiva which you are allowed to go down into and it is quite interesting. The ventilation is good and the temperature will maintain itself about 57F year round. There were many theories as to why the cliff dwellings were built in the cliffs. The old theories figured it was mainly defensive. There has been no evidence discovered of violent conflict and this theory has lost favor. The current theory involves passive solar heating. The overhang of the cliff was far enough out that it protected them from the high summer sun while during the winter the lower sun shone directly on the sandstone walls providing solar heat.

There has been very little structural work done on the Spruce Tree House it is much as it was found in the 1800s.

There are a surprising number of cliff dwellings visible as you travel around the roads in the park. We spent most of the afternoon driving around the loops in the park stopping at the lookouts and looking at the dwellings. Cliff Palace was not open for visiting but we were able to see it from the viewpoints. We were amazed. It sure made us want to come back when we could tour it for real.

This area is loaded with stuff to see and is only a days trip from the Grand Canyon. This is a place where we will have to come back to and spend some time. The four corners area is an amazing place.

Subject: Grand Canyon
Date: Thu, 11 Nov 1999 18:32:17

WOW.

How can you describe this, words just don't cut it. A brit and I were joking about that today as we looked at the vastness of the Grand Canyon.

Well, a big hole in the ground really doesn't cut it. Below Niagara Falls is a canyon. Now picture looking at a thousand of those canyons at once, only picture them many times deeper and with no water. Drive 5 miles down the road and stop to see a few more thousand canyons, repeat for 30 miles. Or put more simply: WOW.



View from inside the canyon

The north rim is closed now, it is only open in the summer. We are on the south rim. We can see the north quite clearly, it is only about 10 miles away. It takes about 215 miles to drive there, another measure of the size.

We wanted the chance to hike into the canyon and we didn't want to chance not being able to on our next pass through Arizona in January. We will definitely be stopping back again.

It was absolutely wonderful weather for our hike. We struck out on the South Kaibab Trail at about 10, the trail was in the shade and it was cool wearing just a sweatshirt but as long as we were moving we were warm. Moving was little problem as the general direction was DOWN. The grade wasn't as steep as a stairway but it made you really contemplate the trip back up. At one point I looked over the edge and had to stop to take a picture. The first part of the path down the mountain is about one and a half people wide, if you meet someone, someone has to stop. The path is straight for about 30 yards and then does a 180 degree switch back and then across below your original path until you get to the next switch back. In the picture I stopped for, you can identify seven of these straight sections going down the mountain like stair steps.

We eventually walked down to the light and it was sunny and warm. From all of the signs and warnings they have real problems with heat exhaustion and even heat stroke in the summer. According to the lady who checked us in at the campground, we couldn't have hit a better time, cool in the mornings, warm in the afternoon, and not crowded. The end of the trail is at Skeleton Point, 10 km (6 miles) from the starting point. There are no loops so it is 10 km in and 10 km out. Apparently in the heat of the summer they have had a few people die trying to do the in and out in one day. They preach a lot about carrying water and snacks and taking it easy. We did all of the above and had an absolutely fantastic trip.

The first stop is the Ooh-Aah Point at about 3/8 of a miles walking and 780 feet descent. Good name considering you stand there alternating between oohs and aahs at the beauty of the place. The sun was shining, the trail was dry and dusty like talcum powder, the blue sky with just a couple of clouds and it was comfortably warm. We were still feeling pretty good and continued to Cedar Ridge about 1.5 miles walking and 940 feet down. It was spectacular. We walked out to a ridge, had snacks and a jug of water and watched the amazing canyons in all directions. The earth brilliant reds, yellows, and browns, in the thousands of layers of sandstone. We didn't stay long as we didn't want our legs to freeze up, so we turned around and started back up the hill. Bonnie likes it if I go first, she says I have a more even gait but I think it is more because I tucker out faster than she does and she gets to rest more often if I lead. We stopped a few times on the way back up but I was surprised at how good we did. We were back up to the top and had a late lunch.

We then headed off to the West Rim Drive. The West Rim is closed in the summer and restricted only to shuttle busses. During the winter it is open and we really had a wonderful trip out to the Hermit's Rest at the end of the West Rim Drive. We stopped at almost all of the stops and we were amazed at the scenery. Every once in a while they would have a plaque that was a picture of what was in front of you with many of the features labeled. We really liked those and spent a lot of time looking at all of the different features. Things like the Colorado River were quite hard to find at times, at other places the river was very easy to see. The Granite Rapids were very visible and loud, we could hear them rumbling below, many hundred feet below.

The Colorado River was dammed in 1963 and hasn't been the same since. It is called Colorado, Spanish for "coloured red" because of all of the silt carried by the river. The Glen Canyon Dam now provides a settling pond for the sediments and the Colorado now looks more green than red. Other effects are less obvious, there were eight original species of fish, four of them are no longer found in the Grand Canyon a fifth is on the way out. Foreign species of plants are crowding out native species, and the Cottonwood trees are not reproducing as they should. Beaches are being eroded and without the spring freshet replenishment of silt archaeological sites are surfacing and being destroyed by erosion.

Hermit Rest was named after a Canadian born prospector named Louis Boucher that staked claims in the canyon before it was a park. He was described as a kind and gentle and not a true hermit. Other activities that surprised us was a mine that was use up until 1969. It was a copper mine in the late 1800s. It was discovered in 1951 that the Orphan Mine was a rich supply of uranium and was America's richest source of uranium. By 1969 uranium, silver, copper and vanadium were mined out and the park service acquired ownership and closed the mine for good.

We really had a great time looking around the park and are looking forward to seeing more tomorrow on our way out.

We got up and headed out the east rim and back to where we came. On our way we made a number of stops and one that really stood out was the Desert View. There is a gift shop full of local crafts and



souvenirs. The gift shop is constructed like a kiva and that is interesting by itself. Attached to the gift shop is a watchtower, which costs a quarter to go up. We really enjoyed the structure and the art on the walls. The views out the windows were incredible. The structure itself is a work of art.

The trail we walked was visible from a number of the stops. We have added another thing to our list. A night at Phantom Ranch Lodge at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. You can see it from a number of places along the Rim. We might have to check it out in January. It is on the north side of the Colorado River. The suspension bridge crossing the river looks like an adventure by itself.

We are heading back to Utah for Monument Valley, the Canyonlands and the Arches National Monument. We are coming back to the Grand Canyon in January, it will be neat to see the winter face of the canyon.

But next time maybe a mule trip will be in order.

Subject: Monument valley, Canyonlands, and the Arches
Date: Sat, 13 Nov 1999 18:56:39

We left the Grand Canyon and backtracked most of our way to the Four Corner Monument and headed up into Utah. We spent most of the morning touring in the Grand Canyon's east rim and didn't leave the park until early afternoon. We arrived at almost sundown at the Monument Valley campground run by the Navajo. We were going to do the 14 mile tour of the valley but we didn't fit. There are a number of Jeep Tours but seemed pretty pricey when converted to Canadian dollars. Especially as we were going to drive by many of the red buttes and mesas on the way up the highway.

We enjoyed the sunrise over the buttes in the morning and headed toward the Canyonlands National Park's southern area called The Needles. We stopped into an information booth to get a Utah road map and the girl there gave us a suggestion for a scenic route to the park using roads that weren't on the Utah map. They were all paved but windy and steep in places. The scenery was incredible. We drove into the Canyonlands and was astonished by the wild red country side. The Canyonlands is best explored by a four wheel drive or hiking.



The colors of the Double O Arch

We got up and drove toward the Arches National Park one of the largest collection of natural stone arches in the world. We stopped in Moab and tried to get some maintenance done on Millie, but Saturday didn't seem to be the day for getting stuff done. The Arches National Park is only five miles up the road from Moab but the campground is about 18 miles in from the visitor center. We are now parked in the campground and mellowing out for a couple of days. We were here early enough that we were able to spend the afternoon hiking to three of the arches within walking distance as well as a couple of short hiking trails.

The campground is surrounded by red sandstone buttes, arches, and is high up in the mountains so the

view is spectacular. There are also very few lights to mess up your night vision so stargazing is pretty impressive as well.

Tomorrow we are going to do a few more trails and see a few more arches and have a Sunday that is actually a Sunday. It has been quite a while since we just parked for a day.

If your interested in more info on the arches try <http://www.nps.gov/arch>

Subject: Arches moan groan
Date: Sun, 14 Nov 1999 20:02:07

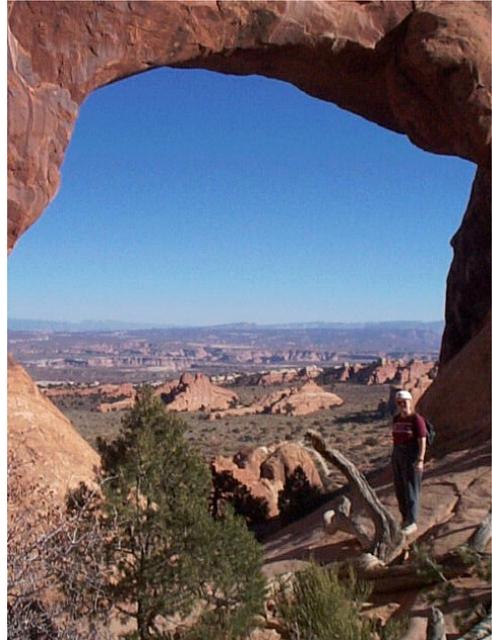
What a day! We hiked in the area called Devils Garden from about 10 until about 2 and covered all of the trails except the primitive trail. We had a great time and after about 7.5 miles we were back having lunch. We probably should have stopped then but we didn't we dove down to other areas.

We talked to a bunch of hikers along the way most were from Salt Lake City down for a days hiking. They were really impressed with the weather it is about 15 degrees F above normal and are setting record highs for the last week. At this point Bonnie decided that Millie's mascot should be a Leprechaun. We have had such wonderful weather it is hard to believe.

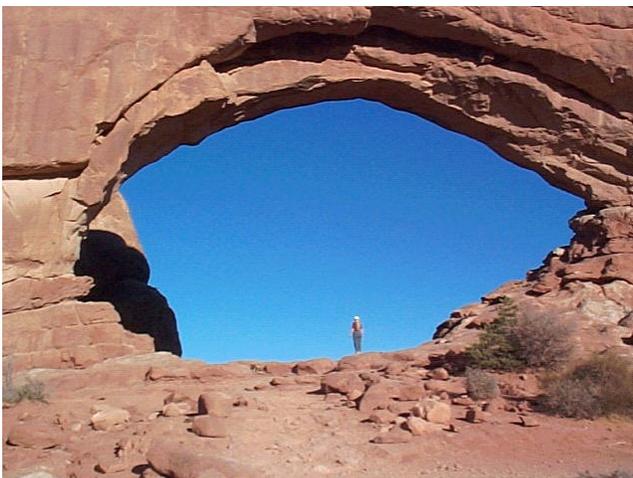
The Arches National Park is a very special place geologically speaking. It is sitting on top of a salt deposit in places thousands of feet thick. The ages have laid down thousands of feet of deposits that has formed sandstone up to a mile thick. Salt doesn't take the weight very well and has shifted, buckled, liquified, and repositioned itself. In doing so, it has forcibly rearranged the Entrada(salmon colored) and Navajo(gray) sandstone. The solid block pushed up in the middle by the liquified salt cracked and over the years the cracks widened and became what are today called fins.

These fins are large thin sheets of sandstone laying on their edge sticking sometimes hundreds of feet into the air. As the weather eroded these fins often pieces would break off the side and even break a hole all the way through the thin sheets, when this happened an arch was formed.

The arches gradually erode away and are destroyed. The Landscape arch is one of the most impressive. It is 306 feet from side to side and the thinnest part of the arch is only 11 feet. In 1991 a large chunk (60 feet long, 11 feet wide and 4 feet thick fell off), they closed the area under the arch so tourists don't have too intimate an experience with Entrada Sandstone.



Bonnie in front of the Partitian Arch



Some of the arches are LARGE

The trail up toward the Dark Angel travels through some spectacular scenery and on the edges of some of the fins. I have a picture of Bonnie walking along the trail, the trail is about 10 feet wide with multiple hundred foot drops on either side. With lots of people traveling it can get fun at times.

We spent last night's sunset sitting in Skyline arch and was amazed at the colors of the stone. We spent tonight's looking over at Delicate Arch. Delicate Arch is one of the more well known arches as it appears on the Utah license plate. Lovely way to spend an evening.



Tomorrow morning we are going back into Moab to see about some brake pads for Millie and then we will probably head into the Island in the Sky section of Canyonlands National Park. After that Salt Lake City and Nevada.

Subject: Canyonlands (Island in the sky region).
Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999 20:44:50

The Canyonlands National Park in Utah is divided into three pieces: The Needles, The Maze, and The Island in the Sky regions. I have the impression that the Maze is 4WD accessible only and since Millie is not exactly the best off road vehicle you have ever seen we stuck to the Needles and the Island in the Sky region.

After Millie got her front break job we headed to Dead Horse State Park. It is about 30 miles from Moab and we stopped there for the night. We barely got there by dark as it took most of the day for Millie.

Legend has it that the area got its name from the days when cowboys used to drive wild mustangs to the bluff and it was easy for them to trap them on the bluff since the neck leading in is about 30 yards wide. They would corral them by blocking the neck with brush and branches. Normally they would select the horses they wanted and then release the rest. One time for unknown reasons they left the horses there to die of thirst within view of the Colorado River. The two thousand foot drop made it a might inaccessible.

The view is spectacular. The cuts in the rock show six layers of different colors of sandstone and are very pretty. They are also "mining" in the area and you can see one of the mines. It's a different kind of mining than what we are used to. I'm not sure if it is salt they were mining or potash. They drill a hole down to the layer of the stuff. Inject water, pump it out into evaporation ponds and then let the dry desert winds



Prettiest mine I've ever seen.

evaporate the water, when the water is gone, they harvest. The operation we could see had eight evaporation ponds each one at a different level of water, and each a different shade of blue. It really set off the nice red rocks nicely. I'm sure there are environmentalists out there screaming but I thought they looked kind of pretty. Compared to some of the open pit mines we have driven by THEY ARE!

We were off to the Canyonlands Island in the Sky region. We stopped at the Visitor center and looked through exhibits on the desert life of the area. They have a section on how each type of animal has adapted to the dry and hot conditions.

The Kangaroo Rat is a neat animal it doesn't drink water. It gets its water from the food it eats and it's kidneys are so efficient it urinates dry crystals. Permanent kidney stones, guys that has gotta hurt.

The rabbits have adapted to radiate 30% of the body heat via their ears.

They also have scorpions about the size of two fingers of my hand, rattlers (little ones), and a snake that is a constrictor but small enough that human's don't have to worry. Lots of friendly critters.

The Canyonlands have overlooks that show the Colorado River and the Green River. The Green River really is green here, so is the Colorado. They have a picture in the brochure of the confluence of the Green and the Colorado where the Green river is green and the Colorado is red. You can hike to the overlook from the Needles but we wanted to see if the Colorado was red before we hiked the 11 miles. It wasn't.

There were four vehicles in the campground last night, us, someone from BC, someone from Alaska, and someone from Colorado. We are seeing lots more Canadians now. We must be in snowbird country.

We left Canyonlands this morning and headed off toward Green River. It is a little town that has eight hotels, six gas stations, and 734 people. MANY campgrounds and a state park. How can such a little place get so much stuff? It is in the middle of nowhere, 110 miles west to the nearest gas station, Moab is about 70, Salt Lake City (our next stop) about 180 miles.

We had a great day and short as we were coming from Canyonlands. We did a bunch of little chores that have been building up and with about eight little jobs checked off we are heading off to Salt Lake City bright and early tomorrow. We would like to get in early and see if we can get to the Mormon temple for 8 o'clock choir practice.

Subject: Salt Lake City to Virginia City
Date: Thu, 09 Dec 1999 18:35:24

Salt Lake City is in an area called "The Great Basin". It is a interesting area because water does not flow out of the area. There are mountains all the way around and the only way water gets out of the basin is via evaporation. The basin is quite a big area from Salt Lake City to Reno and south to near Las Vegas. The city got it's name from the lake that dominates the area and it is indeed salt water. The salt and minerals leech from the surrounding mountains during the spring runoffs and during the summer the water evaporates leaving the minerals behind. It is interesting that the lake has different levels of salinity depending on where fresh water is entering the lake. It ranged from 5% to 24% mineral content the day we were visiting the lake.

The Great Basin is also growing. The earth's crust is stretching causing Reno and Salt Lake City to move apart at about the same rate as your fingernails grow.

Salt Lake City was founded by Brigham Young and the Mormons. It is the home of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints (the locals just call it the LDS church). All of the addresses within the city are relative to the temple and by looking at the address of a place you would know how many blocks east or west as well as how many blocks north or south it is. For example the Tandy Repair shop is 4892 South 300 West. It was quite easy to find, we turned south on 300 West street (3 blocks west of the Temple) and then drove south for almost 49 blocks.

Temple Square is definitely the focal point for a lot of tourist activity. We went to Temple Square and took a tour. We had a great tour by a pretty young lady from Germany who was doing her missionary work. The boys get to do the door to door visits we all know and love ;-) and the girls get to do missionary work at places like Winter Quarters or Salt Lake City. It was an interesting tour but we don't get to go into the Temple itself as it is reserved only for Mormons. The Visitor's Center, Tabernacle, and grounds were open for visiting and they were setting up for Christmas and getting lights working on the displays while we were walking around. We made it to choir practice and they do have a building with amazing acoustics. You can actually hear a pin drop from one end of the place to another 170 feet away. The pipe organ is simply HUGE. The choir director was interesting to listen to even though his directions were well beyond our musical understanding. The organ has 11,623 pipes and some of the pipes date back to the original construction of the Tabernacle.



The Temple dressed for Christmas

Our CD drive stopped working and since we did use it quite a bit for our trip planning software we needed to get it fixed. We dropped the computer off and the parts for repair were back ordered for a couple of days and rather than wait around in Salt Lake City we headed out to Antelope Island State Park. The park is in the middle of Salt Lake. The 7.5 mile causeway connects the island and one of the many bedroom communities of the city. It is an interesting little park that has a lot of antelope, TONS of rabbits, and a large herd of bison. They also have a primitive campground where we stayed for a couple of days. While we were there we started getting snow and COLD weather. We went back into town to check on the computer and since they really couldn't give us a time when it was sure to be repaired and thanksgiving weekend as well as forecasts of colder weather and more snow, we worked it out that we would head west and the repair shop would ship it to the nearest Radio Shack where we would pick it up.

We bailed and headed out across Route 50 in Nevada. Life Magazine named it the loneliest highway in the world. It reminded Bonnie of the scene in Forest Gump where he was running across the desert with mountains in the background. We would drive for 30 or 40 miles across a flat desert and then drive into a set of mountains, through a pass and down the other side, where we would drive 30 or 40 miles to the next set of mountains. We did four passes the first day before stopping at a BLM (Bureau of Land Management) campground for the night. The campground had a short walk that included a

number of petroglyphs and an overlook of Big Smoky valley. A valley with a naturally occurring hydrocarbon haze. The next day we were up and doing passes and valleys, three the second day. Austin, a small place on the way through the highway was notable as having the worst price for gas we have seen yet \$2.01 per gallon. We didn't buy any, we were on fumes by the time we got to Fallon. But while we were refueling, twelve fighters of various types took off from the Navy's "top gun" flight school. We were impressed with Route 50, it was really pretty.

We stopped in Virginia City where we stayed for Thanksgiving Weekend. We ended up staying in Virginia City trying to arrange medical insurance for the rest of the trip. It was also warmer and fun to look around. We also found out that the computer was repaired and we arranged to have it sent to Albany Oregon where we would be in a few days. It was only waiting until the package was late arriving in Albany that we discovered that it was on it's way to Islamorada Florida Keys (our mail forwarding address). Although one clerk had got everything set up to go to Albany the shipping clerk then proceeded to send it to the address on the label. Our computer was now 2500 miles away and we were heading in opposite directions. We were heading to northern Oregon and it to southern Florida.

Subject: Virginia City to Lake Tahoe

Date: Thu, 09 Dec 1999 19:44:09

Virginia City was named by a guy from Virginia who after dropping and breaking his bottle of booze didn't want to go completely to waste so he used it as a christening "I christen the Virginia Town" and the party began. Two guys were prospecting in the area and a third man who was known as being too lazy to cook bread and ate all his flour as pancakes argued that they were on his land and he was entitled to a 1/3 share of the discovery. They finally agreed and he went all over town talking about his lode and after a while it took his name, the Comstock Lode. The three sold their share of the Comstock Lode to four men who carried on to discover the bonanza. The Comstock Lode was worth hundreds of millions of dollars. It kept the US solvent during the civil war and Nevada became a state during the war. Nevada's two senate votes allowed the passage of the 13th amendment. The state motto "Battle Born" is very true.



Virginia City has its share of casinos including the famous Delta Saloon. The city has a nice mix of casinos, coffee shops, art galleries, and curio shops. We really enjoyed walking around town and through the graveyard near town. It was a lot of graves dating back to the crazy days of the bonanza, including a guy from Pictou County NS.

A number of buildings have shifted over the years and looking across the street at them you wonder if there is a straight corner or a pair of parallel lines anywhere on them.

Mark Twain worked at the local paper and actually started using the name Mark Twain during his time here. One of the museums we visited was showing a video about Mark Twain and came out with

something that I never knew. Apparently Samuel Clement's was not the first person to use Mark Twain. After the first person using the name died and the name became available he started using it.

He also had to do a quick run out of town as the territorial governor issued a warrant for his arrest for challenging a reporter from a rival paper to a duel. Dueling had been outlawed.

After leaving Virginia City we headed toward Carson City hoping to find a quick oil change place for Millie (another 5000 km bites the dust). We spotted one on the way out of town and after a quick change we were off again. Just up the road was the turn to Lake Tahoe. We turned the corner and started to climb, for over two thousand feet without so much as a level spot. Lake Tahoe is a fresh water lake high in the mountains that is definitely cottage country. The water is clear blue and green and we could see the bottom along the edge of the road. There was supposed to be a campground open but it had closed early this year. The weather forecast called for snow in the Donner Pass since we had good weather we pressed on and made it to Grass Valley that night.

The Fairgrounds at Grass Valley was busy with the local Christmas craft fair, we had a good time shopping the fair. We also found the third best cinnamon buns so far! They had young teenagers running around in elf costumes. They were the Errand Elves. For tips they would package sit, run errands, baby sit, carry parcel's to cars, and sell mistletoe. The only ones doing much were the package sitters, but I thought it was a great idea.

The next day we headed toward Oregon (pronounced Or-eh-gun). They make a big deal about pronouncing it right.

Subject: Shasta Valley, Rogue River, Albany, and Champoege
Date: Fri, 10 Dec 1999 20:02:02

After leaving Grass Valley we headed up through central California and were amazed with the huge groves of Walnuts, Almonds, and fruit trees. The Shasta Valley was incredibly pretty and worth the trip north all by itself. There was snow at about the 6000 foot level in the mountains and we were happy to start getting a little closer to sea level. A number of the mountains in the area are pretty high and were a dazzling white. Mount Shasta itself is 14162, Lake Shasta with all it's fingers was incredibly pretty.

As we crossed into Oregon it started to rain it didn't stop raining until we crossed into California on the way out. (Almost exactly on the borders both times!)

Rogue River was the first of many Oregon campgrounds that we stayed in. Oregon has some of the best sites that we have seen. Many are full hookups with good power and nice camp hosts. They also have Yurts. Yurts are like permanent tents with windows and a comfortable interior that you could rent. (Tenting for people without a tent.) This is "Discovery Season" which allowed us to buy 7 nights of park passes called "Camper Bucks" for \$77. Without the pass rates were \$15 to \$16 dollars a night so we figured at worst we would break even or gain a little on the Camper Bucks. Unfortunately there were no convenient parks near Albany for us to wait for the computer so we stayed in a nice little campground in Albany and caught up on laundry, did a little Christmas shopping, and waited for the computer. After the date the computer should have arrived we finally called to find out a shipping error had sent our computer to our mailing address in Florida rather than to Albany. It was on a slow truck to the Florida Keys and wouldn't arrive in Florida for at least a couple of days. We were not pleased when we hit the road.

Champoeg (pronounced Sham-Poo-Ee) was an interesting camp site built near the site where the Oregon government was voted into existence on May 2, 1843. The residents were concerned that without a government their land claims would not be respected by the inrush of settlers expected to arrive. The previous votes to form a government were unsuccessful due to the pressure from the Hudson's Bay Company who was opposed to the formation of the government and urged the French-Canadians to vote against the motion. The government was finally formed a committee was formed to draw up the laws and it was agreed there would be no governor, there were to many ambitious contenders for the job.

There was a village on the site until the river rose and wiped it out. They rebuilt and a few years later the river wiped it out again and people took the hint and didn't rebuild. Today you can walk through the parkland and see posts marking the street corners that existed decades ago. We walked a few miles around the park and got a call from my brother saying he had just gotten an early retirement package from work. Great news, maybe he can get a chance to come for a visit.

Subject: Oregon's Pacific coast
Date: Mon, 13 Dec 1999 21:32:43

We worked our way up to the northwestern tip of Oregon. The mouth of the Columbia River was protected by Fort Stevens during the civil and second world wars. The guns are gone but the embankments are still there and open for exploring. Some are quite extensive with a couple having exhibits about different aspects of the fort.

We walked along the trails to the Peter Iredale Beach, named after a shipwreck still visible on the beach. All that is left is the support structure of the bow, what I think is the internal structure of the rudder as well as what looks like broken off steel masts and some of the deck structure sticking up through the sand. It is a haunting reminder of what can happen to even large vessels at sea.



Peter Iredale is a stark warning of the power of the sea

We walked a long way down the beach and was quite impressed at how clean the beach was. There were great rafts of long seaweed but very little trash just a few small pieces of plastic. Bonnie was looking for her favorite souvenir, etched beach glass, we but couldn't find any. We had a real nice day walking along the beach.

We pulled out the GPS and were north of our mooring in Douglas Harbour by a bit and a little over 2700 miles west. It was rainy and wet but reasonably warm, high 30s at night and mid 40s in the daytime. It was snowing at the 2500 foot level. Since we were closer to 25, we were still in the rain area not the snow area. Weather forecasts are unique to each area. Oregon gives the weather and it is sectioned off into horizontal and vertical pieces. They will give you the weather for an area and then give another little caveat saying in this area over 2500 feet it is snowing! Since you go up and down as you travel the highways those strange little elevation signs become much more useful.

We traveled down the coast along Route 101 and had spectacular scenery the whole way, even in the rain this place is pretty impressive. The "Tsunami warning" and "Tsunami Evacuation Route" signs were a new bit of scenery that we were not sure we were glad to see or not. The coast was suffering from all of the rain we were having, talking to one of the locals they got over eight inches of rain Thanksgiving DAY (yes one day). We encountered a number of road crews clearing debris from the road and places where rivers have overflowed their banks and left muddy silt behind. We were quite happy to take the higher not quite so level sites over the flat and muddy ones much lower and closer to the river. Winter means rain in this stretch of Oregon.

We stopped in a state park called Sunset Bay and arranged for the computer to get delivered there. We lucked into the Shore Acres Botanical Gardens Christmas lights. They had over 200,000 Christmas lights decorating the gardens. Most were just static displays but with the slight breeze blowing the still green leaves of the flowers (with roses in blossom) the lights twinkled and sparkled in the rain. They had a number of sculptures done in lights, pelicans in flight, frogs, salmon, and sea creatures. Two were animated, a gray whale spouting and a four phase panel of an orca coming up out of the water, twisting in the air and splashing back into the water. We walked over both nights we were there just to enjoy the lights. We forgot to carry our flashlight for our return trip the second night, was it ever black walking along the road on the way back to Millie.



During the day we heard barking like a seal but it was louder but further away than we could locate. The next day we drove down to a place that promised sea lions and it delivered in glorious numbers. We watched them for quite a while, amused with their antics. A couple were laying where the surf was washing the spit of sand from two sides. One wave would come and roll them over, the next coming from the other side would roll them back. They played in the water for quite awhile before finally swimming off to the rocks nearby. Others were barking at the waves as they washed over the small rock they were on. They were large, loud, and entertaining to watch. We were shocked at the numbers of sea lions clustered together in such a small area. They seemed to be having a great time.

We stopped a few more times down the coast to watch the rollers crash on the beach with the lighthouses warning craft of the perils nearby. The Oregon Coast is a very pretty area. We are anxious to get south to warmer weather, we wanted summer this year but we seemed to have fall since early August. Warm weather would really be appreciated now.