



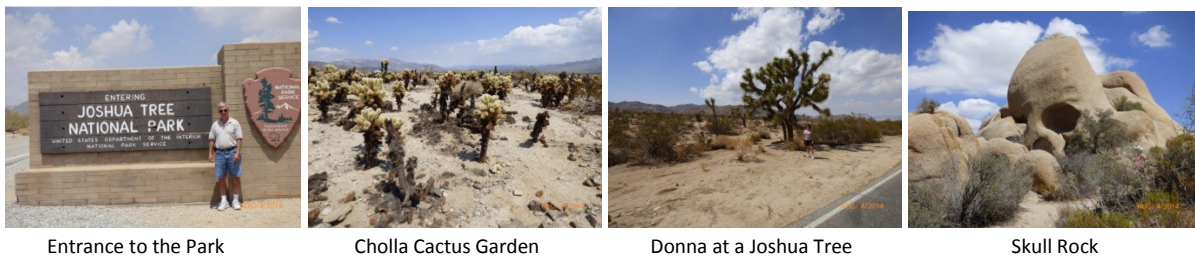
## 2014 National Parks Tour #2

(August 3, 2014 to September 7, 2014)

We left home on Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> heading for Joshua Tree National Park, our first stop on a 5 week adventure in the west and northwest USA, to visit as many national parks as we could. After a long drive we stopped for first night at a Passport America campground in Brenda, AZ. The park was known as 3 Dreamers.

	<p>A fierce storm was brewing as we arrived at the 3 Dreamers campground. We had to wait for several hours before it blew over.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">←</p>	<p>The next morning we drove to Oasis Palms RV Resort, our temporary home, 40 miles outside of Joshua Tree National Park.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">→</p>	
---	--	--	---

Joshua Tree National Park – Two desert systems, the Mohave and the Colorado, abut within this park, which divide the park into two ecosystems with different appearances and elevations. We stopped at the Cottonwood Visitors Center before doing a loop around the park beginning at the Pinto Basin Road. We went through the Cholla Cactus Garden, north to the Oasis Visitors Center at Twenty Nine Palms.



As we drove out of the park toward our campground we past a gigantic windmill farm near 29 Palms, CA →



The next morning, Tuesday, August 5, we drove about 350 miles in the direction of Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks. We had reserved a campsite at nearby Horse Creek where we dry camped for two nights. Fortunately a nearby water spigot enabled us to fill our on-board water tank. The camp was hot and dry with lots of prairie dogs for Josie to bark at.



In the morning we began our tour of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Big trees and big canyons inspired the separate founding of these parks. The two parks are joined together and span 66 miles in length and 36 miles wide. We entered the parks at the Foothills Visitor Center in Sequoia, drove past and hiked in to see the General Sherman Tree (the largest living thing, by volume, on Earth) then proceeded to the Grant Grove Visitor Center in Kings Canyon. At that point we stopped and hiked a one mile trail to see the General Grant Tree.



Entrance to Sequoia NP



Largest Living Thing on Earth



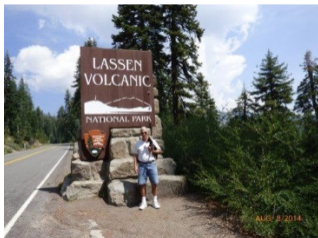
Kings Canyon Visitor Center



Looking into Kings Canyon

On Thursday, August 7 we drove to Lassen Volcanic National Park, not knowing what to expect. We were pleasantly surprised at what we found. This park is incredibly beautiful, with spectacular forests and challenging hiking trails.

Lassen Volcanic National Park is home to Lassen Peak, a volcano that last erupted on June 14, 1914. Until Mt. St. Helens blew in 1980, Lassen was the most recent volcanic explosion in the lower 48 states. We entered the park at the Kohm Yah-mah-nee Visitors Center at the southern end of the park, and drove all the way through it to the other end where we camped at Manzanita Lake. While on route we stopped at various locations for sight-seeing at elevations ranging from 7,000 – 8,000 feet. The next day we hiked one of the trails and attended an evening talk by one of the park rangers.



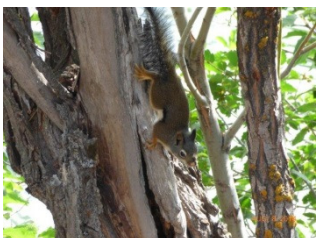
Entering Lassen Volcanic NP



Manzanita lake Campsite



Donna while hiking a trail



Squirrel – Local wildlife

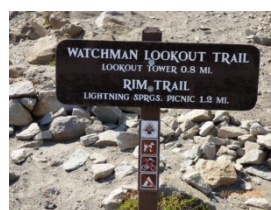
On Saturday, August 9, we left California and drove to Crater Lake National Park in Oregon, 21 square miles of water in a volcanic caldera. The crystal clear blue water is surrounded by cliffs towering almost 2,000 feet above the water. The crater is the result of a cataclysmic eruption of Mt. Mazama around 5700 BC. We camped about 40 miles south of the park in Prospect RV Park, where we enjoyed an evening campfire circle with other campers the day we arrived. The campground provided the community campfire as well as free hot dogs and marshmallows for everyone. We were also entertained by an outstanding cowboy singing duet. It was a fun evening. The following day we drove on Rim Drive around Crater Lake. On our first stop we decided to hike to Watchman Peak, a steep climb, for a better view of the lake and Wizard Island. Rim Drive circles Crater Lake for 33 miles, and includes over 20 scenic overlook areas.



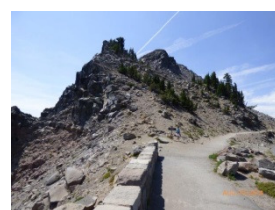
Entering Crater Lake NP



Crater Lake & Wizard Island



Watchman Trail



Watchman Peak

In the afternoon we arrived at the Cleetwood Trail, which is a strenuous hike that leads to the water. Going down the mile long trail was easy. Going back up was not. Donna made it half-way while Carey continued to the bottom.



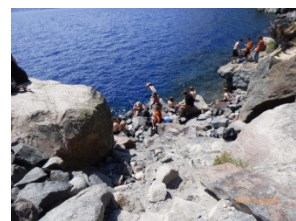
Donna resting ½ way down



First view of the water's edge



Made it to the bottom

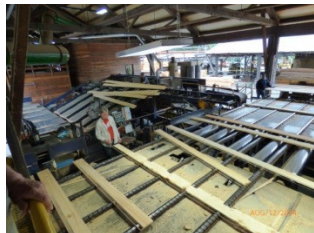


People diving off rocks

Before we headed back to our campground, we took one more hike – to Plaikni Falls. (Shown below)



The next day, Monday, August 11, we drove to Albany, Oregon to rendezvous with the Rotary Recreational Vehicle Fellowship group for a 5-day rally. We camped at the Blue Ox RV Park in Albany, with full hook-ups and 10 other RVF couples from various parts of the country. The rally was organized and hosted by Ed & Lois Goering, RVF members who live in the Albany area. Every RVF rally begins with a Happy Hour the day of arrival, usually followed by a welcome dinner provided by the host or as part of a "pot-luck." This rally was no exception. It also included entertainment by an local polka/carousel orchestra. Tuesday, August 12 was a day for sightseeing in the Albany area. It began with a tour of the Hull Oaks Sawmill in Monroe, OR. (Hull Oaks Sawmill cuts/planes/finishes only douglas fir and some hemlock.)



Later that morning we were treated to a tour of the Marathon motorcoach factory. This is a luxury motorhome manufacturer that only builds RV's in the \$750K to \$2M+ price range. Most of their clients are movie stars, race car drivers, and private individuals or corporations. See below.



We had lunch at Chiefs Brew House in Coberg. The food was excellent. After lunch we toured the historic Thompson Mill, Oregon's oldest water-powered mill. It has been operating since 1858, making it older than the state itself. The antique mechanisms have produced flour from a variety of grains over its lifetime, as well as electricity. (See below.)



Thompsons Mill Heritage Site

Milling system of gears & pulleys

Pulley sending water to turbines

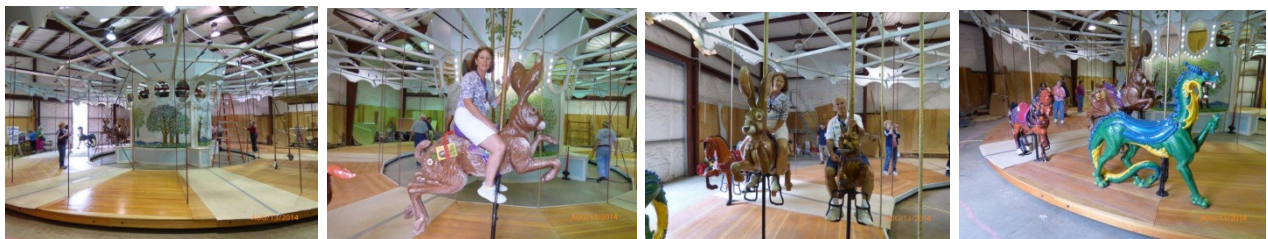
After breakfast on Wednesday, August 13 we caravanned to the Palm Harbor Homes manufacturing facility for a tour of their factory. We were not permitted to take pictures inside the factory, but the tour was well organized and gave us a comprehensive understanding of how single and double wide homes are manufactured & transported to the buyers site.

Later in the morning we visited Albany's Historical Carousel Museum which is supported by a group of community volunteers who are working to bring the magic of old-fashioned carousels to downtown Albany. According to their brochure – they are “working to create a menagerie of unique carousel animals that are hand-carved and hand-painted using traditional styles and techniques.” The carousel will hold 52 animals and 2 chariots. This is a very interesting and value-added project that has strong participation from volunteers in the community and local merchants. They have a vision to create a world-class carousel complex at this location to draw visitors to the area and contribute to the economic revitalization of historic downtown Albany.



---- Some of the hand-carved/painted animals to be placed on the future carousel ----

Scale model of the large carousel



The main carousel before animals

Donna on one of the animals

--- Only 5 animals have been installed to-date. More are in progress ---

In the afternoon we were treated to a tour of the Platt dairy farm. (See below.)



Thursday, August 14 was a “free day.” We used it to get a new tire for the trailer, and to get the truck serviced. It needed new rear brakes and shocks, transmission oil flush, and several other things now that we had reached the 70,000 mile mark in it. While I was getting the repair work done, Donna went on a local winery tour with some of the other RVF members. I made the best of my time by picking some blackberries along the side of the road. Donna picked more the following day then made a blackberry cobbler for all the RVF members to share the next morning.

The next day, Friday, August 15, the group enjoyed a morning talk on Nanotechnology from a local electrical engineer – Skip Rung. This new science is one of the major industries here in Oregon. That afternoon the we went on a covered bridge tour followed by a dinner at a local Hungarian restaurant – Novak’s. The tour included stops at 5 bridges.

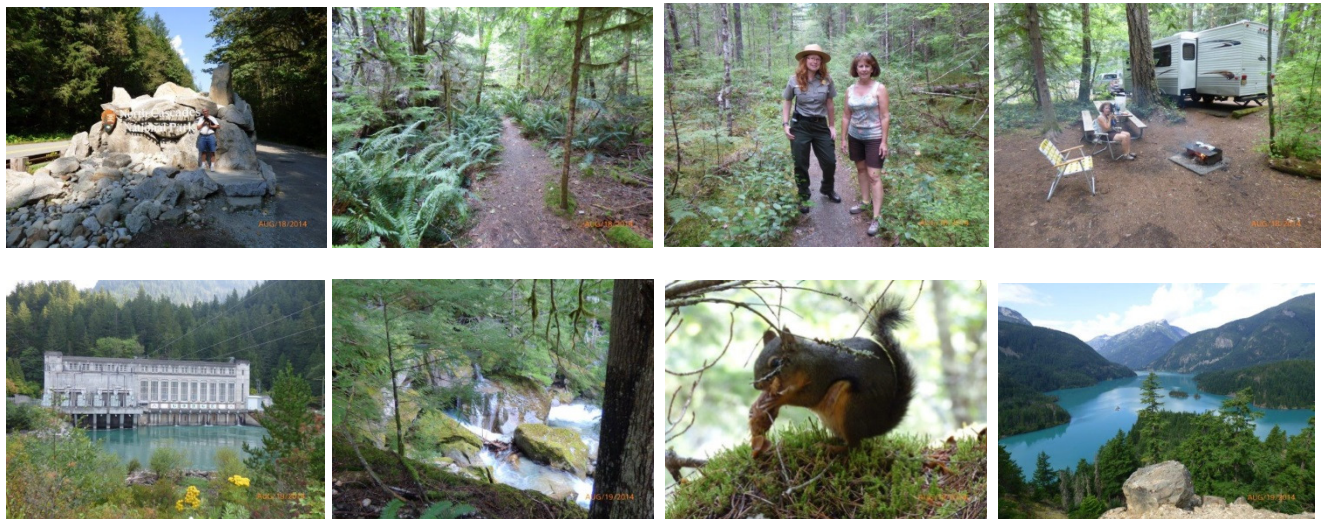


Dinner with the RVF group at Novak’s Hungarian restaurant.  
←

On Saturday morning we said goodbye to the RVF rally and headed toward Mt. Rainier National Park in the state of Washington. Mt. Rainier, at 14,410 feet, is the tallest peak in the continental US. It is also one of the world’s most massive volcanoes and is best known for the numerous glaciers that flow down its slopes. This is one of the most beautiful national parks we have ever been to. As we hiked on the trails, the meadows were covered with flowers of all different types and colors, the weather was perfect, and the blue skies highlighted the crystal clear waters and snow capped peak of the mountain. No one could ask for a more perfect day. It was incredible. God smiled on us today.



On Monday, August 18 we left Mt. Rainier and headed north to the North Cascades National Park. Often called the American Alps, North Cascades has glacier-clad peaks rising almost vertically from thick forest valleys below. The park was established in 1968 to preserve 600,000 acres of Washington's most rugged mountain wilderness. We entered the park at the west entrance and stayed at the Newhalem Campground inside the park. Near our campground was the Gorge Powerhouse, part of Seattle's hydro-electric complex, and Gorge Creek and Ladder Creek Falls. We visited both and did our usual hikes within the park as well. (Note: We always find one or two trails within each national park to hike – great exercise.)



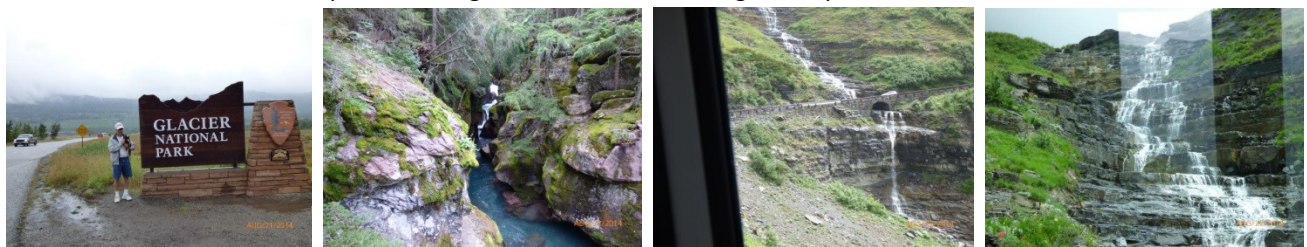
Our next stop was Glacier National Park in Montana.



Glacier was a two day drive from North Cascades so we drove about 70% of the way on day one – Wednesday, August 20. We found an abandoned elementary school to dry camp for the night. It worked well for us. Donna made a nice dinner, it was quiet, so we both slept well that night.  
←

On Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> we arrived in Glacier National Park. It was the beginning of 5 days of rain & cold weather. This was the first rain we had since we left home, and it made up for those nice days. The rain didn't stop for 4 days. Most of our time in this incredibly scenic park was spent in the fog. Nevertheless, we made the best of it, enjoying ranger talks at night & shuttle rides to the major points of interest during the day, particularly Logan Pass, the most scenic area in the park.

Glacier National Park is part of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and World Heritage site. Some travelers who have seen much of the United States & who have been to most of the national parks, as we have, consider this park to be the most outstanding park in the country. We've been here before and will be coming back again (when the sun is shining brightly.) The famous 52 mile "going-to-the sun road" crosses the park and highlights some of the most spectacular scenery anywhere in the world. We stayed at St. Mary's campground on the east side of the park. We were not able to pull the trailer over the "going to the sun road" because of length restrictions and ongoing construction on that road. The weather made picture-taking a real chore so I didn't get many shots. Here are a few.



We left Glacier on Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> and drove to Great Falls, Montana to visit the "Great Falls of the Missouri River" identified and named by Meriwether Lewis during the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition. A dam was constructed at the site, however most of the original falls are still in tact. (See below.)



We camped overnight at one of the Great Falls - Walmart stores, then journeyed to Yellowstone National Park – the first national park on Earth. To our surprise, on route we came across a new POI (point of interest), the Earthquake Lake Visitors center only a few miles northeast of Yellowstone. The center highlights the events of the earthquake that devastated this area on August 17, 1959. The earthquake relocated boulders the size of 10 story buildings, creating a dam and lake that previously didn't exist, and wiped-out one campground and numerous homes which were buried by the new lake. A total of 14 people died in the incident. This center was built a few years ago to commemorate the event, and honor those who died.



When we continued, we arrived at the Yellowstone National Park west entrance on our way to the Canyon Village campground. We decided to stay there for two nights. As we were positioning the camper into our campsite, we had to stop because a female elk was casually strolling right at the point where we were to park. Later that evening we attended a ranger talk about the people who saved the buffalo. For those of you who don't know this, Yellowstone National Park is an immense active volcano, one of the largest and most violent on Earth. At the same time it is much more than mud pots, hot springs and geysers. Located on the Continental Divide, it is home to numerous species of wildlife, alpine lakes, deep canyons and vast forests. On March 1, 1872 it became the world's first national park.



Arrival at Yellowstone NP



Female elk in our campsite



----- Morning hike to Storm Point on Yellowstone Lake -----



Artist Point at Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone (View from the top) -



We hiked to the bottom of the falls & took this photo about 1/2 way

The next morning, Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> we left Yellowstone headed for the Grand Teton National Park. While driving out of Yellowstone we photographed a wolf who was casually walking along the road. As we continued, we passed the majestic peaks of the Grand Tetons, then made our way through the picturesque town of Jackson Hole, Wyoming heading for our next stop - Fossil Butte National Monument.



Wolf on the highway



---- Passing the Grand Tetons ----



Ridge of Mountain Peaks in Grand Tetons NP



We arrived at **Fossil Butte National Monument** late in the afternoon. The fossils found here are among the world's most perfectly preserved remains of ancient plant and animal life from 50 million years in the past. In 1972 Congress designated this as a National Monument to preserve the butte and its record of the past. The primary point of interest is the Visitors Center itself where they have fossils showing incredible detail, on display. The weather was threatening again so we continued on our way and camped overnight at a Walmart in Rock Springs, Wyoming.



Entrance to Fossil Butte



Fossil display at the Visitor's Center

← Fossil Butte Monument

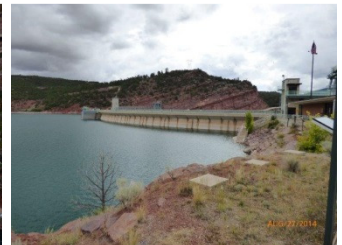
The next day we drove through Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area and stopped to tour the Flaming Gorge Dam → in Utah.



Flaming Gorge Dam Visitor's Center



Flaming Gorge Dam – Creek Side



Flaming Gorge Dam – Reservoir Side



Hydro-Electric Turbine Room



Downstream from the dam

We entered Colorado the same day, Wednesday, August 27 and made our way to Dinosaur National Monument where we camped overnight at Green River campground in the park. Before stopping for the night, we chose to stop at the Visitors Center and take a shuttle to the Quarry Exhibit Hall where remains of dinosaur fossils and bones are on display.

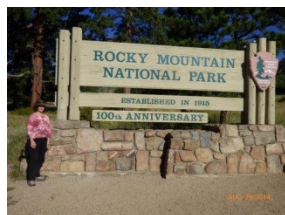


Quarry Exhibit Hall – Dinosaur Fossil Exhibit

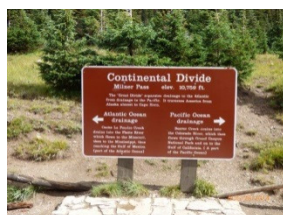


Stegosaurus Skull - From the Jurassic Period

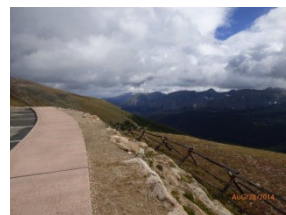
On Thursday, August 28 we began our ascent to the top of Rocky Mountain National Park on our way to Estes Park, Colorado where we camped at the Mary's Lake Campground for 5 nights. We entered the park at the west entrance and followed Trail Ridge Road for 50 miles, which climbs to 12,200 feet to a land like the vast arctic expanses of Siberia, Alaska & northern Canada. It was a road with very few guardrails & the highest paved highway in the continental United States. Scary as it was, nevertheless, we made it all the way without incident & arrived at our campground in time for dinner.



Arrival at Rocky Mountain NP



Continental Divide

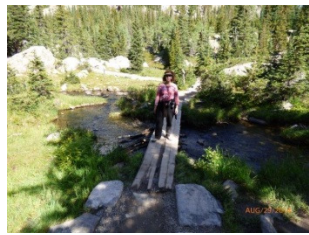


Stop at 12,200 feet on Trail Ridge Rd.

On Friday, August 29 we began the morning with a hike to Emerald Lake in Rocky Mountain NP. The hike started at the Bear Lake trail head and we hiked 1.8 miles, stopping at Nymph Lake and Dream Lake before arriving at Emerald Lake.



Nymph Lake



On the trail to Emerald Lake



Carey at Dream Lake



Emerald Lake

Friday night we made a campfire and roasted foil packets of sausage, potatoes, onions and peppers. It was delicious. The next day we took a break from the normal routine in the morning and afternoon, and spent time cleaning and doing some upkeep and maintenance on the trailer and truck. I also spent several hours preparing this trip summary. Around 4:00pm we drove to the Estes Park Event Center to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> annual John Denver Tribute Concert. This is our 3<sup>rd</sup> time and it was an outstanding event. On the way to the show we stopped at the fairgrounds to check out the alpaca market which was next to the Event Center. The tribute concert began at 5:00pm with a country-western group who called themselves Chain Station. They played for an hour and they were really good. At 6:30pm Brad Fitch came on stage with his Tropicowboy Band. Brad is the one who looks and sounds like John Denver. He and his band entertained us (nonstop) for two hours. It was a fantastic show.



Alpaca Market in Estes Park



Country/Western Band – “Chain Station”

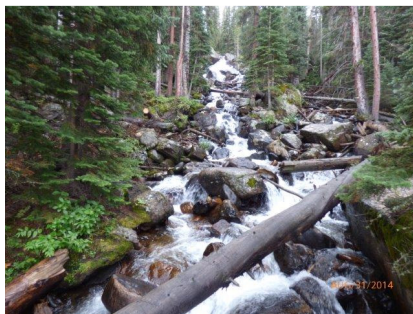


Brad Fitch as John Denver – Great Show

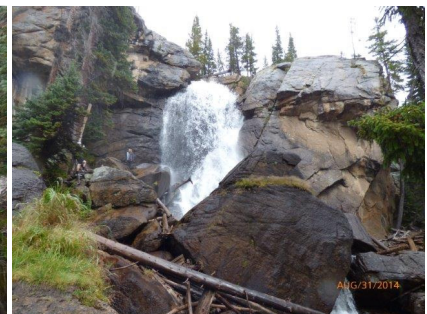
On Sunday, August 31, we decided to try another hike. This time we headed for the Wild Basin area of the park. The rain caught up with us on this one, so for most of the three hours we hiked it was wet, with occasional spots of sunshine. Upon arrival at the trail head we realized we had hiked this same trail several years before, but we continued anyway. This time we hiked all the way to Ouzel Falls, a 5.4 mile round trip. We passed Copeland Falls and Calypso Cascades on route to Ouzel.



Copeland Falls

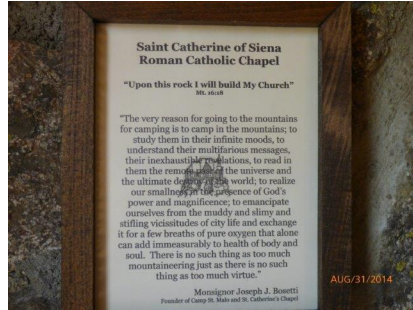
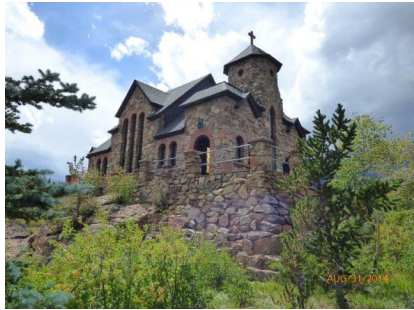


Calypso Cascades

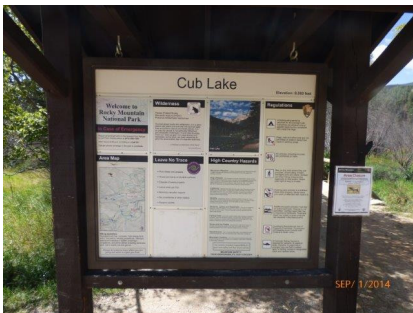


Ouzel Falls

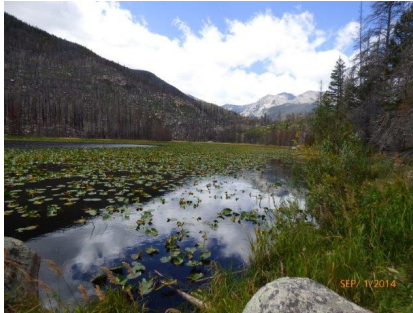
On the way back to our campground we stopped at an old stone chapel, St. Catherines of Sienna which is one of the historic landmarks in the area. (See pictures on the next page.)



Monday was Labor Day, our last day at Estes Park / Rocky Mountain NP. We made the best of it by hiking a 4.6 mile roundtrip trail to Cub Lake which began at the Moraine Park campground in the national park. We arrived at Cub Lake around 12:30pm, ate our packed lunch at the lake, then headed back down the trail. On the way home we spotted a large male elk strolling in the meadow next to the main road to Estes Park.



Cub Lake Trailhead Sign

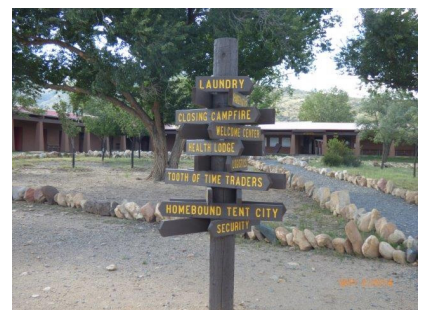


Cub Lake



Male Elk- Check out the antlers

We left Estes Park on Tuesday morning, September 2, heading south toward Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimmaron, New Mexico. Philmont is a place I've never been, but always wanted to visit when I was a scout, and even since then, as well. My son Steve joined one of the week long expeditions to Philmont, with 10-12 other boys, when he was a scout, and had a great time. Philmont is the premier destination in all of scouting, and as of the end of summer of this year, the camp has hosted over one million scouts since its creation in 1939.



After leaving Philmont we drove to Taos, NM and stayed at Walmart for the night. The next morning we headed to Bandelier National Monument, home of the ancestral Pueblo people. Established by the National Park Service in 1916, this park contains evidence of a civilization estimated to be over 11,000 years old, scattered across a landscape of mountains, mesas, and steep canyons. After setting up camp in the Juniper campground within the park, we hiked the two mile Frey trail from the campground to the Visitor's Center. Along the way it joined the Main Loop trail passing several cliff dwellings and alcoves.



Entrance to Bandelier Monument

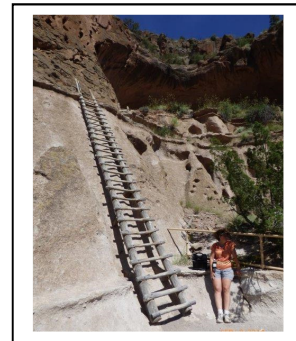


----- Frey Canyon hiking trail -----



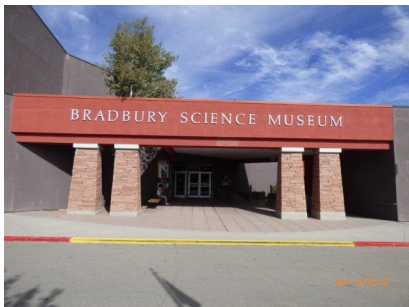
Some of the many cliff dwellings

We ate lunch at the Visitor's Center, watched a 14 minute film about the park, then headed on another one mile trail to the Alcove House cliff dwellings. Here we had to climb 4 vertical ladders, 140 feet to the top of the cliff to visit the dwelling area.



We were tired after hiking and climbing, so luckily, there was a shuttle back to our campground where we relaxed for the rest of the evening.

On Thursday, September 4 we drove to Santa Fe to rendezvous with a new group of Rotary RVF'ers at Santa Fe Skies RV Park for 3 nights. Our first stop was at Los Alamos where we spent several hours visiting the town, and a couple museums. Our time at the Bradbury Science Museum was one of the most educational and thought-provoking of our entire trip. We learned a great deal more about the history of the atomic bomb and all the high-tech projects the Los Alamos labs are working on to meet the challenges of today's world.



Museum Entrance



History of the first atomic bomb – exhibit



Scale model of the bombs that ended WW II

We also visited the Los Alamos History Museum and learned more about the town's secret history leading up to the creation of the first atomic weapons. We also saw a panoramic picture of the city of Nagasaki, Japan after the bomb had landed.



Entrance to the History Museum



Exhibit of the Trinity Test site in New Mexico



Destruction of the city of Nagasaki, Japan

We arrived early afternoon and had our first opportunity to meet the group at the 5:00pm happy hour. There are a total of 11 rigs at this rally. At 6:00pm Rotarians from three Rotary clubs in the Santa Fe area hosted us for a pot luck dinner.

The next morning, Friday, September 5, we decided to visit the nearby Pecos National Historic Park. After checking out the Visitor's center we hiked the one mile trail around the park to view the ancient Pueblo runis, then drove to another trail in the park which they described as the hike around the Gettysburg of the West. This battle was the most western battle of the Civil War where the Union stopped the Confederate army from advancing into Colorado and the California territory.



Entrance to Pecos Historic Park



Carey descending into a kiva



Donna inside the kiva



Remains of the ancient temple

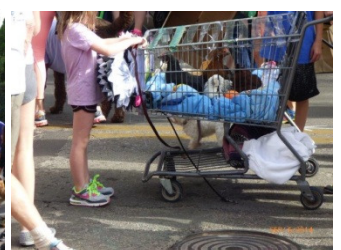
On Saturday we went into Santa Fe to help celebrate the annual festival. The Pet parade began at 9:00am after which we toured St. Francis Cathedral and the Loretta Chapel. Inside the chapel is a staircase that, as legend has it, by a myterious carpenter who appeared after the nuns had prayed for 9 weeks for someone to build the staircase. This capenter then built it, and consequently disappeared, mysteriously after its completion, without accepting any pay.

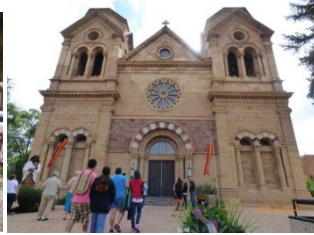


Santa Fe Fiesta



----- Pet Parade -----





----- St. Francis Basilica Cathedral -----

Cathedral Altar

“ Our Lady of Peace “ Statue



Original stairway built by the “Carpenter”

The stairway today – with railings added



We had lunch at the Festival – A chesseburger on “fry bread,” one of the specialities of the fiesta.

After lunch we headed back to the campground to prepare for the next day. On Sunday, September 7, after a trip of over 6,000 miles; having visited 17 National Park areas; camped with, and at two Rotary RVF Rallies; toured museums, sawmills, factories and covered bridges; went to one great concert, and hiked on various scenic trails for over 40 miles; we came home.