

2015 Trip Southwest – Text of Our Blog Posts (with routes added)

To see pictures, you'll need to go to <http://modaytrips.blogspot.com/>

Day 1, Tuesday, June 2nd

Left the farm about 6:30 AM, and headed out on this year's adventure, via Y, MO-13, BB, SW 200, MO-58, MO-131, M2, KS-68, I-35 & US-54. Got to Wichita about 11 AM, and got a scenic tour thru the city, compliments of Garmin. We visited the [Art museum](#), which has a small but nice collection of Russells, along with a few well-known & not-so-well-known American artists. Decent museum.

We ate lunch at River City Brewing Co, adjacent to the [Museum of World Treasures](#). Food was good, didn't try the beer. The museum, however, was awesome and eclectic. 3 floors covering all eras from dinosaurs to the modern, with an excellent militaria collection, along with mummies, Greco-Roman relics, etc. Too much to mention.

Last stop was the [Mid-America All-Indian Center](#), which had some art by some notable Indian artists. It's also adjacent to a prominent steel sculpture called Keeper of the Plains.

Left Wichita at 3:15 on US-54 and got to Pratt at 4:30. Staying at the HIE, and ate at a little hole-in-the-wall Mexican place called El Trancazo on the recommendation of the desk clerk. It was good, but come payment time we found that we had both forgotten our wallets at the motel. Sandra stayed as hostage while I hustled back, got the wallet, and returned to ransom her.

Tomorrow it's, Tucumcari via Greensburg, Mullinville & Liberal (the Cattleman's Cafe for lunch). For the day 333 miles.

Day 2, June 3rd - Pratt to Tucumcari

Off at 6:50 this morning, with sunny skies and a good headwind. We made our first stop at Mullinville, home of Mr. Liggett's "totem poles." If you've driven west of Greenburg KS on US-54, you've seen them. He is a folk artist who makes 'things' out of old farm machinery, auto parts, and anything metal that will cut and/or weld - often making a biting commentary about politics or the social order. We missed seeing him at that early hour, but the photo shows a small sample.

Then the long trip to Liberal for lunch. Got there about 9:30, so what to do until the Cattlemen's Cafe (our usual stop in Liberal since we discovered the restaurants in '02) opened? Well, just down the street we found Dorothy's house (from "The Wizard of Oz") and the [Coronado Museum](#). We didn't feel particularly wizardly, so saw the museum only. Who'd have expected gunplay requiring the National Guard intervention in a discussion of the location of a county seat? Yep, they have the story. At 10:30, we opened the cafe and had our favorite meals, chicken fried steak for Bill & pot roast for Sandra.

The plan was to stop for gas at Dalhart, TX. Gas prices were a tad high (like \$2.69) so we kept going all the way to Tucumcari, only 3 1/2 hours later. First stop (after the comfort break) was the [Mesalands Dinosaur Museum](#), where the local junior college blends paleontology and art by making bronzes from casts of dinosaur bones. Students dig the fossils, help prepare them, and hand them over to the artsy set to cast the bronzes, including a full size triceratops skull. We also 'dig' dinosaurs, and Sandra even got a ride on one.

Tucumcari, once a major stopping point on Route 66, was slowly decaying, so the locals decided to add some attractions. It now is full of murals, many depicting the Route 66 history and others showing local

history of cattle & railroads. Dinner was at Dell's Restaurant, a Route 66 fixture. As we drove by the landmark [Blue Swallow Motel](#), we saw a bunch of classic 'Vettes pulling in, so we had to stop. It's on-line, so if you're looking for some 66-nostalgia, look them up. However, we stayed at the Holiday Inn Express.

Tomorrow we explore new territory, heading south thru Clovis & Portales to Lovington & Hobbs, where we'll spend the night. Today 348.9 miles, 682 for the trip; US-54 all the way.

Day 3 - June 4th, Tucumcari to Hobbs

Theme of the day: Murphy. As in Murphy's Law. Just a lot of little disappointments, I guess.

Left Tucumcari at 7 AM via Historic Route 66 to San Jon, a nice, leisurely stretch while the traffic on I-40 buzzed nearby. Climbed up the mesa at Cap Rock and continued the rest of the day on the Llano Estacado - the featureless flat grasslands. Our first stop was the bustling town of Clovis. Our stop there was - hold onto your seat - a Dollar Tree store, 3x the size of any around our part of Missouri. Clovis is a military town as well as a major railroad employer, with extensive RR yards on the old AT&SF.

Portales is about 20 miles south of Clovis. ENMU (Eastern NM University) has several museums. The Anthropology Museum was closed and locked with nobody able to locate someone in charge - naturally, this is the one we were most interested in. The [Natural History Museum](#) is small, and concentrates on reptiles, especially semi-aquatic ones - turtles & a gator, plus a few local snakes and some fish. The [Miles Mineral Museum](#) is also small, but has a wide variety of rocks & minerals plus pieces of a large meteorite that was found locally. Meanwhile, we found that the business phone wasn't ringing - not good!

Another 85 miles past vegetated dune fields and operating oil wells brought us to Lovington, named for one of the pioneers of cattle drives thru the Llano (the Goodnight - Loving Trail). The attraction here is the [Lea County Museum](#), with several buildings in the main complex and almost one whole side of the courthouse square. A sign on the door said the manager was running errands. We went looking for a place to eat, finding Taqueria Jalisco. This was a good meal, and reasonable. Back to the museum - sign still on the door and locked up tighter than a drum. Oh, well.

Another 20 miles to Hobbs, looking for the [Western Heritage Museum](#). Missed it twice, so seeing our Holiday Inn Express, we pulled in & asked directions. Wonder of wonder, our room was ready by 2:30, so we checked in, deposited our bags, and went back to the museum. The local hall of fame would be of more interest to the locals, although we did recognize some big name rodeo stars. The other exhibits were being rotated, so little to see. Sigh.

We went to Wal-Mart & a young whippersnapper reset the ringer so it worked. Then we drove thru downtown, circled the city, then found a recommended BBQ place. To quote Lili Von Stupp, "How ohdinawy." Back at the motel, we couldn't get any local channels on the TV - the desk clerk unplugged the TV and it reset. Whew. So, I guess the day wasn't that bad, after all. Via Historic 66, NM-469, NM-209, US-70, NM-206 & NM-18 - 230 miles total.

Day 4, June 5th - Hobbs to Las Cruces

Left Hobbs about 7:20 AM for a leisurely trip to Carlsbad (the city, not the cavern), since the attraction we planned to see didn't open until 10. In Carlsbad, we visited the local CVB, a thrift store called the Cat's Meow (benefits the animal shelter), and the library, before hitting the museum. It's a nice, smaller museum with a good collection of prehistoric pottery, some nice regional art, a model layout of the city in the early 20th century. Ran into someone there from Stover, MO, where our friend Sharon has a

donut shop. The museum also has a NM Painted Pony called Horse N Buggy.

Then it was on the road to Artesia, where we had a buffet at a fancy restaurant & admired the bronzes along the street. After Artesia, we headed up US-82 toward Cloudcroft & eventually Alamogordo. Cloudcroft is almost 9000 ft altitude, so it's a popular summer getaway for folks from lower, hotter areas. It's also a tourist trap. We didn't stop.

Our next destination was White Sands, after a stop at the Holloman AFB Exchange for some SPF 50 sunscreen. With clouds building back over the mountains we had just come thru, we tried to get some good shots. Bill operates on the premise that "pixels are cheap" while Sandra is a bit more selective.

From White Sands, we hurried to Las Cruces, where we checked in to our HIE, then went to meet Sandra's Uncle Murray to go to dinner at a small local place, Nopalito. Good! Got to bed around 10 PM. 309 miles on the day, and the Subaru turned 10,000 miles just outside of Las Cruces. Hiways US-62, US-285, US-82 & US-70.

Day 5, Saturday June 6th - Around Las Cruces

We picked up Sandra's Uncle Murray and friend Peggy around 8:45 and headed to the [New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum](#). This is an interesting place, with extensive animal husbandry displays (w/ live animals), displays of area agriculture going as far back as the Mogollon culture, plus several art exhibits. Worth a visit for kids of all ages.

We headed for the next museum on our list, the Zuhl Museum at NMSU. It was closed tighter than that proverbial drum. So, 'twas downtown for the other 3 museums and a visit to the craft market that ran 4 long city blocks on the blocked-off Main Street. Lots of crafts, some food, and some musicians - right in front of one of our favorite stops, the [COAS Book Store](#).

The museums are all clustered on Main St. at one intersection, in repurposed commercial buildings. The [Museum of Nature & Science](#) covers dinosaurs, the Permian era, local desert facts, and the discovery of Pluto (the on again-off again planet). The [Museum of Art](#) had a "juried" display of local contemporary art - I think one of the artists may be emulating Jackson Pollock. The [Branigan Cultural Center](#) had more on the discoverer of Pluto, but I think one exhibit area was closed as I didn't see some of the local history I remember seeing on a previous visit.

Lunch was at the Mesilla Valley Kitchen, which is notable for home made potato chips w/ the salsa, instead of tortilla chips.

After a break in midafternoon, we picked up Murray & Peggy & went to La Nueva Casita, where we met Sandra's cousin Darren, for supper. Sandra had a taco salad & Bill a fancy taco dish. Bill wasn't impressed. Then it was reconfigure the Subaru for travel & hope for a good night's sleep. Tomorrow - Rockhound State Park near Deming and Gila Cliff Dwellings Nat'l Monument, with a stay at Silver City. 38 miles around town.

Day 6, Sunday, June 7 - Las Cruces to Silver City

Hiking day: Our first stop was Rock Hound State Park, where visitors can walk off the trails and pick up rocks. Walking up the trails entails going uphill, looking at the ground the whole time for something that looks like a geode - and maybe for something that rattles. Mostly, the rocks are just rocks, but there's a lot of jasper there. We picked up rocks that looked interesting, took a lot of pictures of the area, then Sandra found what she hoped was the biggest geode ever.

Then we headed for Gila Cliff Dwellings Nat'l Monument, about 100 miles away. The first 80 miles took about 90 minutes; the next 20 took about an hour. We hiked about 1/2 mile uphill to the ruins, then

another 1/2 mile back down. Well interpreted Mogollon culture site, worth the adventurous ride. Then on to Silver City, 43 miles in 90 minutes. Hey, hills, curves, hilly curves, and plain old mountains. At Silver City, we stayed at the HIE, and ate at La Cocina, a popular restaurant we found first time through in 2002. Had some problems with wifi at the hotel, so didn't get this post done until Monday evening. 232 miles for the day via I-10, NM-549, NM-143, US-180, NM-61, NM-35 & NM-15.

Day 7, Monday, June 8th - Silver City to Grants

Word of the day: Dust. We left Silver City about 7 AM heading north. We followed US-180 for about 90 miles, with a stop at a little trading post/motel at Glenwood, NM. Nice people, but rest rooms aren't for the squeamish. We turned onto NM-12, through mountains & prairies to Datil, then onto US-60 to Pie Town, a town with little going for it except for - - pie. We found the Pie Town Cafe, which alternates open days with the other cafe in town. The green chile cheeseburger was excellent, the fries good, and New Mexico Apple Pie - Yum!! It's made with green chiles and pinon nuts!

We were assured an unpaved road to Grants was fine, so we took it. At a Y intersection, we took the county road with the "Grants" sign. 30 miles of dust and scenery, and we came out at El Malpais Nat'l Monument. It's a lava field from a series of eruptions ranging from 100,000 to 3,000 years ago. There are some trails and overlooks in this section, plus a sandstone arch on the cliffs bordering the field.

Made it to HIE in Grants about 3:15, ate at La Ventana (same name as the arch), did the laundry, and got caught up. Tomorrow we're off by back roads to Cuba, via Pueblo Pintado (a Chaco outlier) and a badlands wilderness area with some interesting hoodoos. For the day, 264 miles; the dusty shortcut saved us 40 miles. Via US-180, NM-12, US-60, NM-603, York Ranch Rd (aka Catron County A083, pie Town Rd, Rd 41), NM-117 & I-40.

Day 8, Tuesday June 9th - Grants to Bernalillo

Yep, that's right. We changed our plans a bit, ending in Bernalillo rather than Cuba. Sandra had doubts about the motel in Cuba (so did I), so we decided that we'd stay in Bernalillo, about an hour from Cuba and 20 miles from the NM-4 through the Jemez Valley. We visited Pueblo Pintado, a Chacoan outlier ruin in the middle of nowhere (it's only 1/2 mile off a paved road, which can't be said about Chaco). We also turned off on a side road looking for a wilderness area with easily reached hoodoos. Don't think we found the right place, but still found some interesting rock formations.

Lunch was at the Cuban Cafe, green chile soup for Sandra & a green chile cheeseburger for me. Sandra pulled out the poem and said she wanted to search instead of going straight to Bernalillo. So, we pulled out tomorrow's trip plan and headed up NM-126 toward the Jemez Mountains. This road quickly gets into a heavily forested area, and also becomes "unimproved." That's being kind. We finally got to a paved section near a state park w/ fishing lake, and intermittent rain started falling. Oops, there went our plan to drive down an unpaved (& now slick) Forest Service road to scout it and see the Gilman Tunnels.

So, we continued on 126 to NM-4 and turned east down the long road to Jemez Springs, scouting for places to check out tomorrow, and seeing a few of the tourist stops. The State Monument was closed, we drove past Battleship Rock & Soda Dam, and stopped at the Walatowa Visitor Center. We also took a side trip on NM-485 to see the Gilman Tunnels, originally built for a railroad, in a narrow rocky gorge with waterfalls. Spectacular.

Finally got to the motel, had dinner at The Range (popular restaurant - their logo is a kitchen stove), stopped at a grocery for some local beer, and retired for the night. Tomorrow it's back up the Jemez, check out some spots, visit Bandelier Nat'l Monument, and spend the night at Los Alamos. The 165 mile trip turned into 249 miles via Old Rt 66, NM-605, NM-509, BIA-9, NM-197, Chiulla Rd 1101,

NM-197, US-550, NM-126, NM-4, NM-485, NM-4 & US-550

Day 9, Wednesday, June 10th - Bernalillo to Los Alamos

Another change in plans - we toured the Valle Caldera Preserve, which wasn't on our list, and we missed Bandelier National Monument, which was. We left Bernalillo in good time and bought gas from the Pueblo at \$2.42/, and started up NM-4 toward "points of interest" to us and maybe the Chase. First stop was Jemez State Monument, a set of ruins spanning the pre and post contact periods. Got a lesson from the site manager on generalizing the pueblo cultures, as he informed us of the many differences among them. Shouldn't have mentioned Fenn to him.

We pulled off at Soda Dam for pictures & general looking around, then did the same at the Battleship Rock Day Use area. Continued on up the canyon, checking the likelihood of additional pull offs.

The road continues past the Valles Caldera, site of a major eruption in the formation of the volcanic Jemez Mountains. I wasn't aware one could enter it, but it's available for day use driving & hiking. Signed a release from liability in case we were eaten by a bear & we promised not to do anything we shouldn't. The drive starts on a rutted dirt road that doesn't get any better as it proceeds. It passes historic buildings, buildings used in movie sets, trees, lava domes and open grasslands populated by elk & cattle. Rain was setting in, so we got out before things got slick; it's worth a longer visit. Oh, and there's no food available.

Coming into Los Alamos, we got thoroughly confused. We finally found the downtown area, didn't see any restaurants until we were past them, so we went to the hotel, checked into our nice executive suite (free upgrade), and asked about places to eat. We couldn't remember the name of the one that was suggested, so we ended up at a good but expensive eat-in-or-carry-out place. Back to the hotel, decided to hit the hot tub, then quit early for the night.

Tomorrow it's Abiquiu, Ghost Ranch, and on to Taos. May hit Bandelier early, too. Today's travel - 105 miles, for the trip 2112, via US-550, NM-4, & NM-501.

Day 10, Las Cruces to Taos

Left early & headed for [Bandelier](#); you can drive in before 9, but have to take a shuttle after then. It's been quite a few years since our last visit, so we noticed a number of changes - upgraded museum in the visitor center and diversion channels to ward off flash floods, which have become more numerous since big fires a few years back. Kind of chilly when we started but warm by the time we left.

We left there about 9 & headed for Abiquiu via the lower Chama valley. First stop was Ghost Ranch, to see the [Anthropology & Paleontology museums](#), a bit small but very ably interpreted by enthusiastic staff. Scenery was pretty good, too.

Lunch was at [Bode's in Abiquiu](#), where we got the last water before it was cut off. Then it was up to the plaza in the town, where we took some pictures of the church and visited the local public library; had a good time talking w/ folks there.

Finally, it was off toward Taos via Ojo Caliente & Pilar. We missed the turn to Georgia O'Keeffe's 'White Place' so no pictures there. Crossed the Rio Grande at Taos Junction Bridge above Pilar, where we watched a float raft being launched.

Checked into the [Sun God Lodge](#) in a different suite from our last two stays there, ate at El Taoseno, bought some local beer, and came back to check emails and more. Tomorrow is up in the air; searching if we find an idea, otherwise eating & sight seeing. 173 miles on the day, via NM-502, NM-4, NM-30,

US-84, NM-554, NM-111, US-285, NM-567, NM-570 & NM-68.

Day 11, Friday, June 12th - Around Taos

A nice day in Taos. We had breakfast at El Taseno, did laundry - well, Sandra did laundry while Bill researched ideas for the Chase - and went downtown. Here's the Plaza at Taos and Sandra in front of the [Padre Jose Martinez](#) statue.

We browsed the shops that surround the Plaza, bought a T-Shirt at the [I Love Taos](#) shop, ate at [La Cueva](#), and toured the Kit Carson House Museum. This is a very interesting museum, in a house where Carson lived with his wife Josefa Jaramillo and raised his many children. The house is owned & operated by a Masonic Lodge, since Carson was a founder of the first lodge in Taos.

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Our last stop in town was one of our favorite bookstores, [Moby Dickens](#). The two cats work hard to bring in customers and patrol the store at night.

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With time left in the day, we decided to explore, with a trip up the mountain to Taos Ski Valley. On the way up the mountain next to a vigorous creek, we noticed several beaver dams.

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Afterward, we took a side road to Arroyo Hondo, then back to the Lodge. Dinner was back at El Taoseno, and now we'll sit by the pool with a couple of local beers and try to figure out some clues. 60 miles today via US-64 & NM-150, Cty B-143 & NM-522; more of the same tomorrow.

Day 12, Saturday, June 13th - Around Taos

Any search plans we had for today were washed out. Yep, really nice thunderstorms on mountain, mesa & canyon. However, it didn't ruin our day. After an American style breakfast at Michael's, we spent some time walking around the Plaza marveling at the Farmers' Market that took 3 sides of it. Unlike Warrensburg, most of the vendors were selling obviously fresh vegetables of all sorts, with a few soap vendors and almost no other crafters. Of course, it's a bigger market, even if the quartet of musicians was playing bluegrass.

We then headed off to the [Martinez Hacienda](#), a museum in a restored ca 1800 adobe farmstead of a well-to-do farmer and merchant. It's an interesting combination of lovingly restored rooms with period furnishings & equipment, supplemented by actual demonstrations of weaving, plus use by a quilt guild. One of the rooms had a collection of santos & retablos, religious carvings often found in the Hispanic community here.

After an excellent lunch at Casa de Valdez (best meal so far) in Ranchos de Taos, we headed north to Questa, keeping a watchful eye on the rain over the mountains to east at west. Heading north out of Questa, we turned off to the Rio Grande Wild Rivers Rec area. Storms getting closer, but we pressed on after some photo stops. Just a little bit further... too far, the rain & pea sized hail swept over us, as we made our way back on a curvy road not far from a 1000 ft drop. Got out of the hail, but were in and out of rain all the way to the motel.

After the rain abated, we took a trip across the Taos High Bridge over the Rio Grande Gorge. Sandra took pictures of the gorge; across the road a flock of Bighorn sheep grazed & lazed, adding something to the scene.

It turned out that the storms were over, at least for the day, so we had supper at the very convenient El Taoseno. Tomorrow, depending on weather, we may just take the Enchanted Circle thru Eagle's Nest, Red River & Questa. Today ended up about 126 miles via US-64, NM-522 & NM-378.

Sunday, June 14th - Taos & the Enchanted Circle

After breakfast at Michael's, we headed east on US-64 for the first leg of the [Enchanted Circle](#), a circle drive thru scenic areas of northern New Mexico. First stop was the New Mexico [Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park](#) at Angel Fire. The memorial, established by a doctor in memory of his son killed in Nam, and all veterans of that war, has striking architecture and is quite moving.

We then continued on past views of Wheeler Peak, NM's highest mountain, still with snow on the upper slopes. Next was Red River, a touristy town with a ski resort for winter and outdoor sports in summer. Past Red River we saw the recently closed Molybdenum strip mine - the mountain pays for our steel & special needs.

Nothing much in Questa, so we returned to the Wild Rivers Recreation Area from which we fled in a storm of hail yesterday. This time the weather was perfect, and we got some great views of the Rio Grande and Red River. Some of the rapids were loud enough to be heard from the top of the gorge.

Back to Taos, dinner at Casa de Valdez, and getting ready for Santa Fe tomorrow. We're at the 2600 mile mark for the trip. For today, 123 miles via US-64, NM-38, NM-522 & NM-378.

Day 14, Monday, June 15 - Taos to Santa Fe

Another day when things didn't go exactly as planned. We left early enough going down the High Road, took a few pictures, and got to Tesuque about 10 AM. Started up toward Ski Santa Fe on back roads, and found that the Google map was a bit misleading - state road ends on a dead-end county road. Backtrack. Fortunately, Garmin gave me the road name I wanted, as the road signs didn't. Up this county road until it turned into a forest service road - maintenance went from bad to worse. We pulled over for pictures and watched a downbound car bounce it's way toward us. We decided we were too meek for that jaunt & returned to Tesuque. Another glitch - the cafe Forrest recommended for us to have the ultimate Frito Pie wouldn't start serving lunch for another 40 minutes...

So, it was off to Santa Fe. We were able to check in early to the Holiday Inn Express - Cerrillos Rd, had lunch at Tortilla Flats. then went to the Plaza. First stop was Collected Works Bookstore, where we didn't see the display of Forrest Fenn books we'd seen on a previous trip. Then it was on to the Art Museum, where we enjoyed the exhibits, compliments of the Culture Passes we'd won in a caption contest, compliments of Stephanie. From there, we visited the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, where my military retired ID allowed us free access. Some of the Stieglitz photos of her confirmed she didn't need implants.

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We sat on the Plaza for a while & struck up a conversation with some folks who were originally from Lubbock. Back to the HIE, then dinner at the Blue Corn Cafe, do some laundry, and plan for tomorrow's museum viewing and, maybe, a visit with Forrest Fenn. 113 miles today, via NM-518, NM-75, NM-76, NM-503, US-84, NM-591, NM-592, Pacheco Canyon Rd, & US-84.

Day 15, Tuesday, June 16th - Santa Fe visit

Posting a day late, mainly because the hotel didn't have enough bandwidth for us & whoever was streaming stuff yesterday evening. We didn't get to visit with Forrest Fenn, although if Bill got Sandra's email on his cell phone we would have had a chance. We got downtown early, hung out in the Plaza watching pigeons for a while, then were the first folks through the door at the [New Mexico History Museum](#). This is a great museum with a timeline of NM history, plus special exhibits on Harvey Houses, pinhole photography & sacred iconography.

About 11, we took a break & walked over to [The Shed](#) cafe for our favorite blue corn taco/enchilada

plate, green, Sat outside, and of course called our friend Sandy back in Missouri. When she was planning a trip to Santa Fe several years ago, we told her about The Shed, and she called us as she was enjoying lunch. Now, every time we come to Santa Fe and eat at The Shed, we call or text her over the blue corn plate.

Back to the history museum to finish our visit, one more floor and the Palace of the Governors. As we left, we looked at the sky, and the clouds were building. Thunderstorms on the mountains to the east, north & west made for great pictures.

We drove out to Museum Hill to tour the [Museum of Indian Arts & Culture](#). The standing exhibit "Here, Now & Always" shows the various Indian groups in NM and how their cultures developed and varied. The museum also has an exhibit of pottery, music/dance, and turquoise. The gallery of art featured artist [David Bradley](#), whose work is, to say the least, interesting - called "Indian County Today" his detailed paintings are both humorous and biting.

More pictures of sky and storms & statues, light supper at Tortilla Flats, and early to bed. Wednesday is more museums. We drove out to Museum Hill to tour the [Museum of Indian Arts & Culture](#). The standing exhibit "Here, Now & Always" shows the various Indian groups in NM and how their cultures developed and varied. The museum also has an exhibit of pottery, music/dance, and turquoise. The gallery of art featured artist [David Bradley](#), whose work is, to say the least, interesting - called "Indian County Today" his detailed paintings are both humorous and biting.

More pictures of sky and storms & statues, light supper at Tortilla Flats, and early to bed. Wednesday is more museums. 16 miles around Santa Fe.

Day 16, Wednesday June 16th - Around Santa Fe

Rats! Missed Forrest again - but we do get to see him tomorrow. We went to the International Folk Art Museum on Museum Hill - very interesting, especially with the new exhibit on cochineal red dye. Those little bugs sure have a lot of uses and made some folks a lot of money. Meanwhile, storms were already brewing in the mountains.

Went downtown and ate at someplace new to us, Tia Sophia's. Yum. Then toured the Museum of Contemporary Indian Art, where the exhibits often have something to say. Sat at the Plaza for a while, then headed back to the hotel.

Tomorrow, after the FF visit, we head for Albuquerque, possibly via the Rancho de las Golondrinas, a living history ranch similar to Missouri Town 1855 near KC. A couple of museums in ABQ, dinner w/ friend Larry Harrah, and a stay at the HIE Eubank. We're up to 2750 miles for the trip, 23 for the day.

Day 17, Thursday, June 18th - Santa Fe to Albuquerque

A tad hot today. We visited Forrest Fenn, who's responsible for the treasure hunt we've been playing with, for a short time about 10 AM. While we were there, another couple showed up to get his autograph on his book.

We left shortly afterwards and decided it was too late to visit Rancho de las Golondrinas, so we headed for Albuquerque. We were able to get a ground floor room at the HIE Eubank, so we unloaded and headed for Old Town. First stop was the NM Museum of Natural History, which we always enjoy - including a quick kiss in the cave. It has an excellent timeline plus a few good casts of dinosaurs.

We walked around the Plaza for a while checking various stores for a specific T-shirt. Lots of stores, restaurants & a nice bookstore. Then it was on to pick up Larry Harrah for dinner at Garcia's. Larry is the widower of noted children's author Madge Harrah, whose books include one about Blind Boone.

After dinner his grandson Cody showed up and we talked for a while. Only 106 miles today, via I-25 & city streets.

Tomorrow is museum day in Albuquerque, starting with the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History. We'll spend some time on the Plaza, eat at Church Street Cafe, and visit some museums at UNM.

Day 18, Friday, June 19th - Albuquerque Day

Here we are in hot Albuquerque. After a motel breakfast, we headed back for Old Town. We stopped for a paper and snacks at Smith's Supermarket, then found a free parking place near the target museum. Since we arrived before it opened, we walked around the Plaza and did a bit of shopping.

The [Albuquerque Museum of Art & History](#) is much improved over our last visit. The new "Only in Albuquerque" gallery is open, with a comprehensive view of the history & culture of the city. The artsy high heel shoes exhibit I could have done without. Back to the Plaza, lunch at Church Street Cafe (same table, same waiter as last year), bought some T-shirts and a book, took more pictures trying to get some art shots, and back to the motel to escape the heat & do laundry.

Walked to supper at Sadie's, near a defunct motel, shared a local beer in the HIE's gazebo while Bill read "The Cimarron Kid" out loud. This is a 1973 book about the CS ranch in Cimarron, NM - we're going to give it to the "Kid" himself on Sunday. However, tomorrow is lunch at the Frontier and a Forrest Fenn searcher party.

Day 19, Saturday, June 20th - Albuquerque Fenn Party

Well, the party isn't really all day. In the morning we went to the [Indian Pueblo Cultural Center](#), which has greatly upgraded its museum exhibits. We'd have liked to stay for the Acoma Buffalo Dance, but needed to get back to be set to go to the party. We highly recommend a visit! Then, we drove down Central Ave (classic Route 66), had lunch at the [Frontier Restaurant](#), and came back to the room to get ready for the party.

Got to the party at 1:15, and none of the other guests were there yet. Left about 6 hours later, but details will be posted elsewhere. Suffice it to say that a good group showed up and it was fun.

Tomorrow it's on to Cimarron via Moriarty, Lamy, Las Vegas, and Mosquero. We're at 2899 miles for the trip, with three days to go, 47 over the last two days.

Sunday, June 21st - Albuquerque to Cimarron

That's via the scenic route. We left at 6:05 AM and headed east on I-40. We stopped at Moriarty for a quick McD breakfast, then headed north toward Lamy. Lamy is the Amtrak stop for Santa Fe, with a small railroad museum, not open at that hour. Then it was up I-25 to Las Vegas for a comfort break, and off on the back roads to Mosquero. All I can say about the drive is "Wow!" Never thought such scenery of 1000 foot escarpments would exist in that mostly-flat prairie country.

We had a nice visit in Mosquero, then across more country to Wagon Mound to I-25. Had lunch at our favorite posole stop in Springer, then the scenic route to Cimarron. Had our \$1 hard ice cream cone at a local store, visited the interesting and eclectic Old Mill museum, then checked into the Cimarron Inn. All I can say is that I slept a bit better than expected in the deep valley bed, in a room without effective cooling after a 90 degree day.

At 6:30 we met "The Cimarron Kid", aka Kirk Davis, and his wife Priscilla at the St. James Hotel for dinner. Kirk was the 12-year-old protagonist of a 1973 book about life on the CS Ranch, with photos.

The St. James is famous for its saloon's role in sending 26 men to their graves with "lead poisoning" during the 1870s-90s. Now it's fine dining and nostalgic lodging - but the .44 inch holes in the ceiling testify to its past. Sandra had saved a copy of the book from 'recycling' and presented it to the family.

After dinner we got a short twilight tour of a small, but important, part of the 125,000 acre CS Ranch. The ranch has several units, but this was the home/headquarters. As we bumped down the ranch road we saw white-tail and mule deer, elk, antelope & jack rabbits, all making sure that not all the forage would be eaten by the ranch's red angus and black baldy cattle.

Back to the St. James, pictures in the lobby and we bid each other adieu. Got back to the motel, couldn't find Sandra's camera. Turned out it was still sitting on the roulette table at the St. James, ready for pick-up in the AM. 342 miles via I-40, NM-41, US-285, I-25, NM-104, NM-419, NM39, NM-120, I-25, & NM-21.

Day 21, Monday, June 22nd - Cimarron to La Junta

Got up at 5 AM & got the heck out of the motel a bit after 6. That means the cafe we'd planned on visiting for breakfast wasn't yet open. We drove past the CS Ranch, picked up I-25, and stopped for breakfast (at McD) & gas in Raton. Nothing open yet. Toured the town & headed off to Raton Pass - all those trips to NM & we'd never crossed this way. The pass is an easy trip - not like those wagons that paid their toll to "Uncle Dick" Wooten the Santa Fe Trail was active.

We'd hoped to see a couple of museums in Trinidad, but our early departure made us way too early to visit the museums. The grounds of the main museum were open, so we shot some pictures & headed for La Junta.

Got to the HIE in La Junta by noon, and a room was ready for us. After unloading and relaxing, we went to lunch at the Copper Kitchen, a real-live quintessential small-town cafe, with all the usual diners. Then we headed for the local museum, where we got a guided tour of a rather eclectic multi-building establishment. The star of the collection is a real stagecoach that ran what passed for roads out here. It's a nice, well-supported museum with enthusiastic volunteer guides.

Tomorrow we're off to visit the Sand Creek Massacre site, ride the Kit Carson County Carousel, ending up at Colby, KS. Getting close to home. 169 miles via NM-58, I-25, & US-350.

Day 22, Tuesday, June 23rd - La Junta to Colby

Left La Junta a bit after 7 AM, heading north on a paved county road. The Arkansas River was way up, and we saw standing water in some yards & fields. After a long drive on CO-96, we came to the turn off to the [Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site](#). The dirt road leading to it was well-maintained, and frequented by turtles, jack rabbits, a snake & lots of birds. The site itself is short grass prairie, with cottonwoods along the intermittent creek, and well-interpreted with a short talk by one of the two rangers there.. A peaceful party of Cheyenne & Arapaho was attacked by Colorado troops under Col. Chivington, killing chiefs who tried to parley under a white flag (they were flying a U.S. flag), then indiscriminately killing without regard to sex or age - then taking 'trophies' from the bodies. It was brought to light by two officers who, with their troops, refused to participate.

Unfortunately, we had to cut our visit short because of the biting flies. We headed for Burlington for a carousel ride, stopping for lunch at the [Alleyway Cafe](#) in Cheyenne Wells (I highly recommend it). The [Kit Carson County Carousel](#) is a classic 1905 design with a player pipe organ and hand carved animals, mostly with the original paint. It fell into disuse but was restored at significant cost. We rode twice, at a whole 25 cents per ride!

Headed east on I-70 to Colby, ate at Los Dos de Oros, and are settling in at the Holiday Inn Express. 3568 miles on the trip, with about 450 to go. 249 miles via CO-109, County 31, CO-96, County 45, CO-96, US-385 & I-70. Home tomorrow!

Day 23, Wednesday, June 24th - HOME!

Home again, home again!

Today we left Colby a bit before 7 AM, bound for Kansas' Grassroots Art Capital, Lucas. It's home to [S.P. Dinsmore's Garden of Eden](#), [World's Largest Collection of the World's Smallest Versions of the World's Largest Things](#), the [Grassroots Art Center](#), and one heck of a [public restroom](#). It's too much to describe, just have to go there to get the full effect!

Rest of the day was driving, driving, driving, with a few rest stops and dinner in Holden. 460 miles on the day, and the Subaru didn't need a refill. I'll add pictures to this and cover more about the trip tomorrow - after we pick up mail, do some shopping, and redeem the cats from the pet resort.

After 4119 miles, we got home at 6:44 PM. It was a good trip, covering parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico & Colorado, plus a wee bit of Missouri. For the day, 460 miles via US-24, KS-18, KS-232, I-70, I-135, KS-4, US-56, KS-31, KS-68, MO-2, MO-131, MO-58, SW200, BB, MO-13 & Y.

Trip Breakdown: OK – 60 miles. TX – 95 miles. MO – 134 miles. CO – 298 miles. KS – 850 miles. NM – 2687 miles (slight difference due to rounding error).

We drove on 6 different Interstate Highways, 14 U.S. Highways, 4 MO State Rtes, 5 KS State Rtes, 3 CO State Rtes, 11 county & misc. roads, and 43 different New Mexico State Rtes.

Used 135 gallons of gas on the trip, an average of 30.51 mpg, at prices running from \$2.42 to \$2.69. Total cost \$346.30, an average of \$2.565/gal.

Stayed 22 nights in hotels/motels, 17 at Holiday Inn Express properties and 5 at independents. With our free nights, our average price per night was \$65. Over the 23 days, we averaged about \$32/day for food.

After lodging, our largest single expense was boarding for the cats!