

A Driving Trip through the Southern States



August—September, 2015

This is the account of a second driving trip that we have taken with Molly's brother Robert, who lives in London. Last summer we drove from Salt Lake City to San Francisco through some of the most dramatic scenery in the United States. This time, Robert wanted to visit the Southern States and visit places such as St Louis, New Orleans, Savannah and Nashville.

We mapped out a route that was similar to one we had taken with Bob's brother Geoff in 2010 and Robert agreed that it covered everything he wanted to see—and he would be over in August to make a start. Despite our best efforts to convince him that August and early September would not be the best time to explore the Deep South, he assured us that heat and humidity would not be an issue for him. We were convinced that he didn't really understand what "heat and humidity" could be like in this part of the world but we agreed to give it a try.

As it turned out, the weather was extremely cooperative and we had only two days when the conditions were a little oppressive. We had many days when the thermometer went above 95°F but the humidity was low and walking the city streets was actually very pleasant. We did experience some very heavy rains (notably as we were enjoying a coffee in the Café du Monde in New Orleans) but these did not interfere with our sightseeing and we never used our umbrellas or rain jackets.

We exposed Robert to a good deal of history (particularly that pertaining to the American Civil War) and there was a lot to digest for a foreign visitor (not to mention those of us who have lived here for almost 50 years) but he took it in stride and seemed to enjoy listening—even though the Southern drawl of many of the guides was a little difficult to comprehend at times.

We touched on fourteen states on our journey and, in addition to the historic cities we toured, we also saw some beautiful coastline and the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains. All in all, we had a great experience and a thoroughly enjoyable three weeks together.

Southern States, August 2015

Wednesday August 26

We left home about 5:30pm to drive to Cincinnati airport to meet Robert after his flight from London via Toronto. His flight was on time, although it seemed to take forever for his bags to appear. However, by 7:30 we were out of the airport and soon arrived at Relish where we enjoyed a very pleasant dinner together. Once home, we chatted for a while (Robert didn't appear to be at all tired) and went to bed about midnight.

Thursday August 27

We went to Bob Evans for breakfast and then Robert and I went for a short walk. At noon we met Peter and Leslie Bridges for coffee at Kidd in Mason and after two hours chatting with them we went to Jungle Jim's in Fairfield. We spent an hour wandering around this enormous and very interesting supermarket, bought a few English items and then returned home. This evening we had dinner at Phoenician Taverna where we shared several appetizers; another very pleasant evening.

Friday August 28

We had breakfast at home and Robert and I went for a 3 mile walk in the neighborhood. It was a beautiful sunny day and stayed that way throughout. A little after noon we went for coffee at Starbucks and then picked up our rental vehicle at Hertz on Montgomery Road. The rest of the afternoon was spent packing and relaxing on the deck, again in perfect weather.

Tonight we met Elizabeth and Chris for dinner at the Brown Dog. It was a very good and leisurely meal and our guests seemed to enjoy each other's company.

Saturday August 29

We had breakfast at Bob Evans with Chip, Colin and Cameron and then returned home to finish packing and get ready for the trip. We left Mason just on noon and drove via I-275 to Lawrenceburg, IN. Here we stopped for 20 minutes to view the downtown area and the Ohio River before heading west on Route 56. This hugged the river virtually all the way to Madison, except for a detour that took us "inland" for several miles. The countryside was almost all farmland with just a few small towns until we reached the sizeable town of Madison. Here we eventually found a coffee shop in an almost deserted town; it seemed that the town had declined somewhat from the rather bustling community that we had seen on our last visit here several years back. However, it was good to stretch the legs a little before driving the final hour to the Courtyard in Louisville for our first night's stop.



Lawrenceburg, Indiana and the Ohio River

We arrived at the hotel soon after five and checked in to relax for a couple of hours before driving the few miles to dinner at Ruth's Chris. This had long been a favorite restaurant of ours – particularly this location on the top floor of a Frank Lloyd Wright building – and Molly and I have driven here on a number of weekends just for the meal.

The day had been mostly sunny and warm (mid-eighties) but not too humid and we had a perfect evening for dinner on one of the tallest buildings in the city so we had great views of downtown Louisville and surroundings as we enjoyed an excellent meal – and celebrated Robert's birthday which occurs tomorrow.

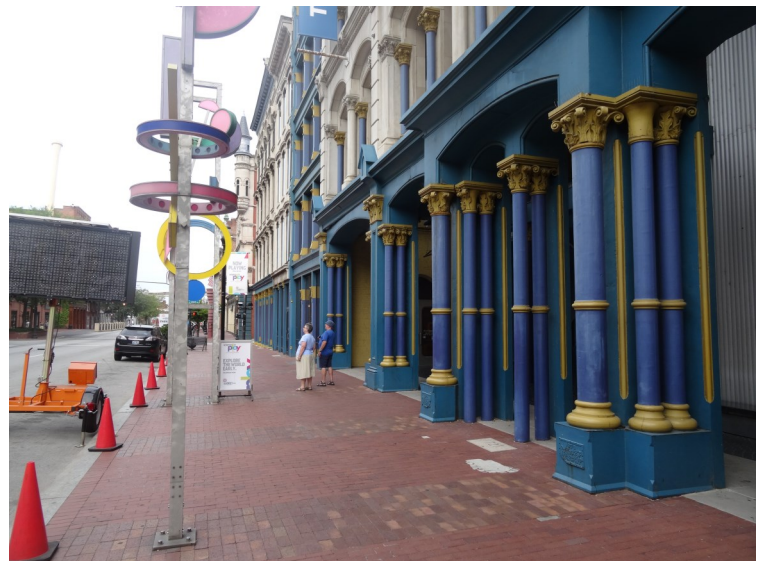


***Happy Birthday,
Robert***



Sunday August 30 (Robert's Birthday)

We walked across the street to Bob Evans for breakfast and then checked out. We drove to downtown Louisville and spent almost two hours walking along the Historic District Main Street with its magnificent ironwork pillars and frontages, and then down a couple of blocks to view the Ohio River once again.





Historic Louisville



We saw the Louisville Slugger building and the Belle of Louisville sternwheeler but didn't take a ride today – we anticipate several more opportunities later in the trip.



Then we took I-64 west all the way to St Louis. There is not a great deal in the way of urban area along the route and we passed through miles of farmland and forest. Consequently it was about 3pm and we were only 60 miles from St Louis before we found a McDonald's for a late light lunch.

We arrived in St Louis about 4pm and eventually found the hotel – despite it having changed its name just a week ago! We relaxed until a little after seven when we drove to Landry's Seafood restaurant about a mile from the hotel. It was a very good meal and a wonderful way to celebrate Robert's birthday (again!) We completed the evening with a nightcap in the hotel lounge.

St. Louis is a city and port in the state of Missouri. The city developed along the western bank of the Mississippi River, which forms Missouri's border with Illinois. It has a population of a little over 300,000. The St. Louis metropolitan area includes the city as well as nearby areas in Missouri and Illinois and has a population of almost 3,000,000.

St. Louis was founded in 1764 by Pierre Laclède and Auguste Chouteau and named after Louis IX of France. Claimed first by the French, who settled mostly east of the Mississippi River, the region in which the city now stands was ceded to Spain following France's defeat in the Seven Years' War. Its territory east of the Mississippi was ceded to Britain, the victor. The area of present-day Missouri was part of Spanish Louisiana from 1762 until 1803.

After the United States acquired this territory in the Louisiana Purchase, causing great distress to its French inhabitants, St. Louis developed as a major port on the Mississippi River. In the late 19th century, St. Louis was ranked as the fourth-largest city in the United States.

In 1904, the city hosted the 1904 World's Fair and the 1904 Summer Olympics, becoming the first non-European city to host the Olympics. Permanent facilities and structures remaining from the fair are Forest Park and associated structures within its boundaries: the St. Louis Art Museum, the St. Louis Zoo and the Missouri History Museum.

The economy of St. Louis relies on service, manufacturing, trade, transportation of goods, and tourism. The city is home to several major corporations, as well as a large medical and research community. St. Louis has three professional sports teams, and is commonly identified with the Gateway Arch on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Monday August 31

We had breakfast in the hotel concierge lounge and then strolled to the riverfront and the Jefferson Memorial – better known as the Gateway Arch. It was a very pleasant morning with slightly overcast skies and relatively low humidity and temperatures in the low eighties.

Molly and Robert took the ride to the top of the Arch (I had done it once and I was not convinced I would enjoy the ride in the small pods again) and spent about 20 minutes at the 630 feet level. On their return we watched a 30 minute movie on how the arch was built – 50 years ago. It was amazing to watch the



workmen standing on narrow girders and moving large pieces into position with no evidence of safety harnesses or any other safety equipment that would be standard today. It really was a magnificent piece of engineering and a fitting tribute to the walking and riding pioneers who had left St Louis in the 19th century to open up the West.

The Gateway Arch is a 630-foot monument in St. Louis, Missouri. Clad in stainless steel and built in the form of an inverted, weighted catenary arch, it is the world's tallest arch, the tallest monument in the Western Hemisphere and Missouri's tallest accessible building. Built as a monument to the westward expansion of the United States, it is the centerpiece of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and has become an internationally famous symbol of St. Louis. The arch sits at the site of St. Louis' founding on the west bank of the Mississippi River.

The Gateway Arch was designed by Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen in 1947; construction began on February 12, 1963, and was completed on October 28, 1965, for \$13 million. The monument opened to the public on June 10, 1967. Both the width and height of the arch are 630 feet (although it doesn't appear that way from our on-ground perspective). The arch is the tallest memorial in the United States and the tallest stainless steel monument in the world.

The cross-sections of the arch's legs are equilateral triangles, narrowing from 54 feet per side at the bases to 17 feet per side at the top. Each wall consists of a stainless steel skin covering a sandwich of two carbon-steel walls with reinforced concrete in the middle from ground level to 300 feet, with carbon steel to the peak. The arch is hollow to accommodate a unique tram system that takes visitors to an observation deck at the top.

The structural load is supported by a stressed-skin design. Each leg is embedded in 25,980 short (2000 pound) tons of concrete 44 feet thick and 60 feet deep. Twenty feet of the foundation is in bedrock. The arch is resistant to earthquakes and is designed to sway up to 9 inches in either direction while withstanding winds up to 150 miles per hour. The structure weighs 42,878 short tons, of which concrete composes 25,980 short tons, structural steel interior, 2,157 short tons and the stainless steel panels that cover the exterior of the arch, 886 short tons. This amount of stainless steel is the most used in any one project in history. The base of each leg at ground level had to have an engineering tolerance of $\frac{1}{64}$ inch or the two legs





Basilica of St Louis, King

“The Old Cathedral”

Founded 1770

Robert attended the noon mass here.

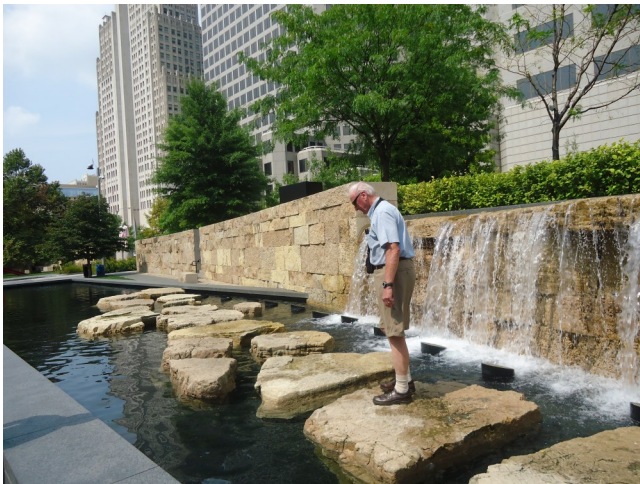
Following our visit to the arch, we walked from the river towards the station along the block wide area bounded by Market and Chestnut Streets. This area contains a





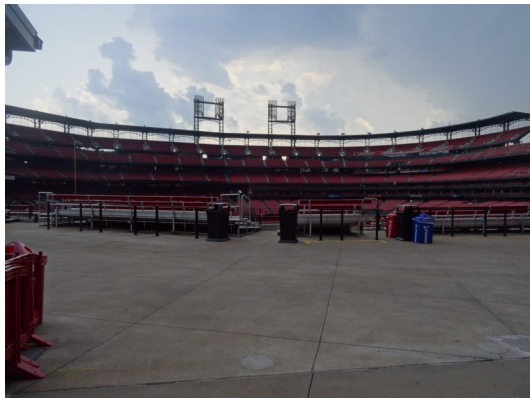
The Old Courthouse, 1748

number of civic buildings, including the beautiful old courthouse, as well as a number of gardens and children's play areas. It was a really pleasant walk in still acceptable weather conditions; not too hot, not too humid and a nice breeze.



The Parks and magnificent old buildings along Market Street.

We returned to the hotel, had a cool drink, and while Molly and Robert relaxed in the rooms, I went for another 3 mile walk to the riverside and then back via Busch Stadium, home of the St Louis Cardinals. Towards the end of the walk there was a tremendous amount of thunder and lightning and I felt a few drops of rain. The heavy rain didn't occur until after I



had returned to the hotel, however, so I stayed dry and enjoyed the walk in remarkably good conditions for late August in the Midwest.

Tonight we walked just a couple of blocks to a Peruvian restaurant where Molly and I enjoyed a very good meal – quite reminiscent of our April visit to Peru – although we got the impression that Robert was less impressed. Again, we finished the evening with a drink in the hotel bar to conclude our time in St Louis.

Tuesday September 1

We had breakfast in the hotel again and then checked out for our drive to Memphis. Rather than stick with I-55 all the way, we crossed back into Illinois and drove along the Great River Road. This stretch is marked scenic on the maps and travels through forest and farmland, with occasional glimpses of the Mississippi River to the west. We stopped

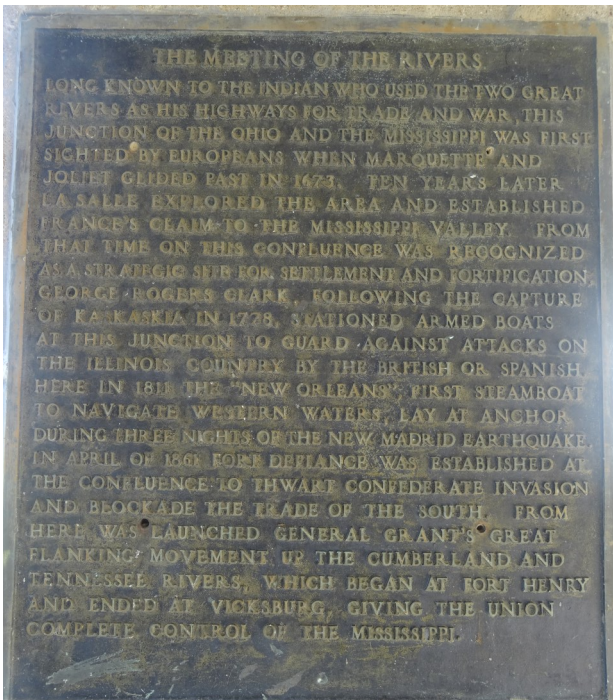


at one overlook near Thebes as we headed south. It was a reasonably fast road (although two lane most of the time) and went through only a few small towns and farming communities.

We followed this Route as far as Cairo, IL which today seems to have nothing to attract visitors – except it is at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Clearly we



had to find this point – and we did! Interestingly, this stretch of both rivers was mapped by Lewis and Clark as they made their way to St Charles for the “official” start of their adventure to the West Coast and there are several markers depicting spots where they camped and prepared for their long journey across the country. It is also interesting to note



that the confluence point has shifted about 2 miles since their visit in 1803 as a massive earthquake in 1808 caused both rivers to change course.

The confluence is bordered by Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri



The confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers

and as a result of the meandering of the two rivers, the Ohio is flowing south at the point it meets the eastward flowing larger river. Conventional wisdom says the Ohio should be flowing west to meet the south-flowing Mississippi. In any event, we found the spot (nowhere as easily as we found the confluence of the Snake and Columbia in Eastern Washington when we covered the Lewis and Clark Trail some years ago).

From Cairo, we crossed back into Missouri, found a McDonald's for a light lunch and then continued south through eastern Arkansas until we crossed the Mississippi for the third time today into the city of Memphis. Our hotel was on the east side of town and traffic was

very slow for the final ten miles due to construction. Nevertheless we arrived at the hotel soon after 5pm and later found a Mexican restaurant (On the Border) for a casual dinner.

The weather today had been mostly sunny although got a little overcast towards evening. Temperatures reached the mid-nineties but the humidity was still very low so the few times we were outside the car it really didn't feel oppressive.

Wednesday September 2

We checked out of the hotel at nine and drove to a local Bob Evans before spending an hour in downtown Memphis.

The European-American city of Memphis was founded in May 1819 and was named after the ancient capital of Egypt on the Nile River. Memphis developed as a trade and transportation center in the 19th century because of its flood-free location high above the Mississippi River. Located in the low-lying delta region along the river, its outlying areas were developed as cotton plantations, and the city became a major cotton market and brokerage center.

The cotton economy of the antebellum South depended on the forced labor of large numbers of African-American slaves, and Memphis also developed as a major slave market for the domestic slave trade. Through the early 19th century, one million slaves were transported from the Upper South, in a huge forced migration to newly developed plantation areas. Many were transported by steamboats along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. In 1857, the Memphis and Charleston Railroad was completed, connecting the Atlantic Coast of South Carolina and this major Mississippi River port; it was the only east-west railroad constructed across the southern states prior to the Civil War. This gave planters and cotton brokers access to the Atlantic Coast for shipping cotton to England, a major market.

The city's demographics changed dramatically in the 1850s and 1860s under waves of immigration and domestic migration. German immigrants also made this city a destination following the 1848 revolutions; both the Irish and Germans were mostly Catholic, adding another element to demographic change in this formerly Protestant city.

Tennessee seceded from the Union in June 1861, and Memphis briefly became a Confederate stronghold. Union ironclad gunboats captured the city in the naval Battle of Memphis on June 6, 1862, and the city and state were occupied by the Union Army for the duration of the war. The Union Army commanders allowed the city to maintain its civil government during most of this period but excluded Confederate veterans from office, which shifted political dynamics in the city as the war went on. As Memphis was used as a Union supply base, associated with nearby Fort Pickering, it continued to prosper economically throughout the war.

The war years contributed to additional dramatic changes in city population. The presence of the Union Army attracted many fugitive slaves who escaped from surrounding rural plantations. So many sought protection behind Union lines that the Army set up contraband camps to accommodate them. The black population of Memphis increased from 3,000 in 1860, when the total population was 22,623, to nearly 20,000 in 1865, with most settling south of what was then the city limits. The white population was also increasing, but not to the same degree.

Memphis is well known for its cultural contributions to the identity of the American South. Many renowned musicians grew up in and around Memphis and moved to Chicago and other areas from the Mississippi Delta, carrying their music with them to influence other cities and listeners over radio airwaves.

We walked on the riverfront a little and then part way up Beale Street, which is the jazz center for the city. It consists of a few jazz halls, a theater, several plaques commemorating local stars – and lots of eating establishments. We felt that an hour here was sufficient for our taste – so we set off south for Jackson, Mississippi.



The Memphis Riverfront and Beale Street.

***Elvis statue; as close as we
got to Graceland.***

The drive was straight down I-55 and we took about 30 minutes out for a lunch break. Consequently we covered the 200 miles in less than three hours and were checked in at the Jackson Fairfield by 4pm. We asked at reception what

there was to do in Jackson and the best we got was an outlet mall and a theater. We probably will at least visit the Capitol before leaving for New Orleans tomorrow!

Tonight we ate at Julep's, a traditional Southern-style restaurant. The ambiance was not overly appealing but the food and service were very good and we got to try a little of the Southern taste as well as the excellent Southern hospitality.

Thursday September 3

We had breakfast at a local iHop, checked out and drove downtown to the Capitol. We spent almost an hour inside the



rather magnificent building and then were directed to the Old Capitol, which is now a museum. This building was opened in 1869 and served as the Capitol for a number of years but then fell into disrepair after the new one was built. However, after it was damaged ten years ago in Hurricane Katrina, it was de-

cided to do a complete renovation and fit it out as it had been originally. Consequently, it now shows the building as it was when in use by the State but also houses other exhibits pertaining to Jackson's and Mississippi's history. Again, we spent almost an hour in this fine building.



Before leaving Jackson we had a Starbuck's lunch and then drove essentially straight though to New Orleans. We took a minor detour to drive across the 22 mile long Lake Ponchartrain Causeway, a low lying bridge that spans this vast expanse of water.

Once in New Orleans we found the hotel, parked the car and checked in around 4:30. We relaxed until meeting again at 7:30 to walk to Brennan's for dinner. . We had a great meal with excellent service in one of the many fine restaurants in this city and one of several owned by members of the Brennan family.

Friday September 4

We had breakfast in the hotel and then set out for our day in the French Quarter. We picked up a self-guided walking tour brochure at the Visitor Center and spent almost two hours covering about half of the sites listed, in the central portion of the French Quarter. The cathedral, Jackson Square and many of the older homes of the city were included as well as several civic buildings

Canal Street, near our hotel





Jackson Square and St Louis Cathedral





Café du Monde break

that are part of the city's history. The weather was kind to us – not too hot and humid and overcast; there was even an occasional breeze to help further. Nevertheless, it was nice to sit down after two hours of walking and enjoy the coffee, beignets and especially the atmosphere that is the iconic Café du Monde.

We had hardly got seated when the heavens opened and there was a tremendous rain storm for about 30 minutes. By the time we were ready to leave, however, the rain had stopped and blue skies were once again beginning to appear.

We decided on a river boat cruise (on the Steamboat Natchez) as our main afternoon activity and spent a very pleasant two hours cruising about seven miles downstream (towards the Gulf over 100 miles away) and a slower return



piece of Americana and synonymous with the Mississippi.

against the current back to the French Quarter. Molly and I have done this cruise a number of times but it was of course a first for Robert – and he said that it was the highlight of the trip so far. Certainly it is a



We returned to the hotel (having walked over 4 ½ miles today) and relaxed until walking back into the French Quarter for dinner at another of New Orleans' famous restaurants, Antoine's. We felt that this wasn't quite up to the standard of Brennan's in either food or service – but it was another New Orleans experience and we enjoyed the company!

New Orleans is a major United States port and the largest city and metropolitan area in the state of Louisiana. The Metropolitan Area had a population of 1,167,764 in 2010 and was the 46th largest in the United States.

The city is named after the Duke of Orleans, who reigned as Regent for Louis XV from 1715 to 1723, as it was established by French colonists and strongly influenced by their European culture. It is well known for its distinct French and Spanish Creole architecture, as well as its cross-cultural and multilingual heritage. New Orleans is also famous for its cuisine, music (particularly as the birthplace of jazz), and its annual celebrations and festivals, most notably Mardi Gras, dating to French colonial times.

New Orleans is located in southeastern Louisiana, straddling the Mississippi River and perhaps its most famous area is the French Quarter. Within this area is the Roman Catholic cathedral which sits across from Jackson Square, named in honor of the general who defeated the British here in 1815 and became the seventh President of the United States. In its 200+ year history New Orleans has been governed by Spain, France, Britain, the Confederate States and the United States – some more than once!

Saturday September 5

Today we completed the self-guided walking tour of the French Quarter, this time the area to the east of the Cathedral in an area nowhere near as busy as the Bourbon Street area. We saw the first Ursuline academy built here, a home owned by General Beauregard, and a number of other historic buildings, many of which dated from the very early days of the city. In fact, we saw at least three that were "thought to be" the oldest dwelling in this part of the Mississippi Valley.





The French Quarter

New Orleans



It was much more humid today than any on the trip so far so a stop in an air-conditioned coffee shop was a welcome part of the tour, before returning to the waterfront near the French Market. Here we spent another hour strolling through the farmers' market as well as the souvenir stalls that seem to sell almost anything.

The French Market



From the market we took the street car to Canal Street, had a coffee lunch at Starbucks and then boarded the St Charles Street trolley for a 55 minute ride along the Garden Route. This area has dozens of huge mansions with beautiful gardens and landscaping and also contains both Loyola and Tulane University campuses. It is a very scenic ride and provides a stark contrast to the more frequented French Quarter.



The Garden Route



We returned to town via the same route, had a cool drink in the hotel bar and then relaxed until dinner time. Tonight we went to Mr B's Bistro, another in the Brennan family of restaurants. We didn't have a reservation and the restaurant was very full when we arrived but, after about 5 minutes at the bar, we were taken to our table. The food and service were very good and the atmosphere was very pleasant despite being a little noisy with such a lot of diners in one big room. There had been a shower while we were eating but we managed to get back to the hotel without the use of our umbrellas.

Sunday September 6

We retrieved the car from its nearby parking garage and loaded our bags for the 300 mile drive to Panama City, Florida. The first 3 hours were on Interstate 10 along the Gulf coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. We had occasional glimpses of the coast and at some points were driving on bridges and causeways either close to the ocean or the Intracoastal Waterway. We had an interesting chat with a local at the Mississippi Welcome Center and we stopped for a Starbucks lunch in Mobile. Other than that we kept driving.



*Along the
Gulf
Coast*

After crossing the Florida state line we left I-10 and went south to Pensacola and then the rest of the way was essentially along the coast. We passed several prosperous-looking towns and several where high-rise condominiums cluttered the water front. However, for the most part it was a very pleasant and scenic drive and a change from 70 mph on the expressway.

The hotel in Panama City was very new and not listed on the car's navigation maps so we had to use the phone to guide us the final few miles but we arrived around 5pm after a long but not difficult day. . We ate at Red Lobster just across the street from the hotel.



Monday September 7 (Labor Day)

We ate at Bob Evans and then set out on the 300+ mile drive to St Augustine. Other than gas and rest stops we made only one major stop to visit the State Capitol in Tallahassee. The new capitol building is actually a non-descript skyscraper but



fortunately the older building has been preserved as a museum. This has the usual rotunda and dome and the familiar layout for House, Senate, Supreme Court and Governor's chambers and is furnished as it was at the turn of the last century. Compared to most capitol buildings we have seen it is rather plain and the furniture is functional rather than ornate. Nevertheless the building and its grounds provided a pleasant stop on our long journey. Tallahassee also provided us with a Starbucks for lunch.



The 200 miles to St Augustine were actually the hardest drive of the trip so far as there was a lot of Labor Day traffic and at times some very heavy rain. However, we kept going and made good time and were checked in at the Courtyard in St Augustine by 6pm – having “lost” an hour as we were now back in the Eastern Time Zone. It continued to rain on and off throughout the evening and the forecast for our one day here was not very promising.

For dinner, we drove into town to Schooner's, a local seafood restaurant where we expected that Robert would finally get to try catfish. Unfortunately they were closed so we ate at another seafood restaurant But still no catfish! Maybe tomorrow.