

Salt Lake City to Salt Lake City
Via
Eight Western States



May 2022

Bob and Molly Hillery

Salt Lake City to Salt Lake City via the Northwest, May 2022

Wednesday May 4

We were up at six at the airport Marriott to catch the 6:45 shuttle to the airport for our flight to Salt Lake City. We had a relatively smooth flight and a good breakfast but saw little of the country as it was overcast the entire way. Picking up the car was easy but, after only a few miles, a warning light appeared on the dashboard. We turned around and got a replacement – but not without the usual hassle that is Hertz.

The drive to Elko was uneventful and, particularly after our lunch stop in Wendover, was an absolutely beautiful ride with clear skies and snow-capped mountains all around. We arrived in Elko at 2pm local time, giving me time for a three-mile walk and a rest before dinner at Luciano's. Dinner was very good as usual, if at a rather frenetic pace. The restaurant was full when we arrived but emptied and filled again in the space of our hour there. The waitresses were virtually running between tables and kitchen!

Thursday May 5

It was cool (forties) and a little overcast as we checked out and went to the Coffee Mug for breakfast. We were on the road west by 9am. We drove a short way on I-80 and then turned south at Carlin for a 90-mile run on a very quiet road to Eureka. It was another beautiful ride with views of many snow-capped mountains and some more desert-like terrain. In Eureka we found a very nice little coffee shop (while the rest of the town seemed empty) and then set out on The Loneliest Road (US 50) to Carson City.



The Loneliest Road—US 50 Nevada



This was over 200 miles of quiet road, several mountain passes up to 7000 feet, and beautiful scenery. We both said how much better this was than following the Interstate. In Carson City, we left US 50 and headed south to approach Lake Tahoe. I had recalled a nice drive through some interesting little towns along the valley after climbing over the mountain from Tahoe. We must have missed the appropriate turning to see that area and continued perhaps a little further south and west than we had anticipated – however, the almost 8000-foot-high pass to reach Tahoe was stunning. So, another fabulous drive found.

We arrived at the Marriott lodge just before 5pm and it was quite a hassle to valet the car, check in and walk the long corridors to our room. I managed a two-mile walk before we went out to dinner at the Edgewood restaurant in another resort just a few minutes away. We had a gorgeous view of Lake Tahoe before it became fully dark, and we enjoyed a very good meal in great surroundings.

Friday May 6



Lake Tahoe

We were up by about 7:30 and checked out before driving a short distance to breakfast. I then did a 3-mile walk before we set off for Sacramento. The drive along US-50 was another spectacular series of vistas of snow-capped mountains, almost vertical rock faces and now, pine forest. We saw significant areas where there had been fires in the last couple of years and a number of houses – as well as trees – had been destroyed. There was also a lot of road work which slowed us down – but gave us more time to enjoy the views.



We arrived in Roseville around 3pm and relaxed until 5:30 when we left to meet Christopher, Cyndi, and Sammy (and Bill) for an early dinner at Mel's Diner in Natomas. It was nice to catch up again – although it had been only a few weeks since we last saw them in Phoenix on our last trip out west. They had a play to attend in Davis, so we left before 7:30 and were back in our hotel by 8pm.

Saturday May 7

We were up about 7:30 and went for a Starbucks coffee before I went for a four-mile walk. We then waited for the message about our brunch date. We met at Early Toast around noon, had a 40-minute wait, but had an excellent brunch – complete with mimosa! We then returned to the hotel (Sammy had a birthday party to attend) and I did another walk. About 5pm we left for Christopher and Cyndi's home and spent a couple of hours chatting before dining at a "Mexican" (actually Oaxacan) restaurant where we had an excellent meal. We were back at the hotel before 10pm.

Sunday May 8

We had another early morning visit to Starbucks and then we both went for walks from the hotel. A little before noon we left for MOD Pizza about 10 minutes from the hotel. We spent the afternoon exchanging gifts – three birthdays and Mother's Day – and then returned to the hotel for a little while before dinner. Tonight we ate at Avatar – an Indian restaurant that is relatively new to Christopher and Cyndi. We had an excellent meal in a very nice ambiance, and it was about 9:30 before we were saying our farewells for this visit.

Monday May 9

We checked out and had breakfast at the Window Box Café, about five minutes from the hotel. We then headed north on Route 65, then Route 70 and 99 until we joined Interstate 5 south of Redding. We intended to stop for coffee in Redding, but a heavy hailstorm hit just as we approached the city. We kept going north towards the Oregon border and we were in the town of Weed (north of Lake Shasta) before we saw a Starbucks. We pulled off in a snowstorm! Fortunately, we were able to park at the door and eat inside so we were able to enjoy our coffee and watch the snow fall. The roads didn't cover but remained wet over the final pass (more snow) and all the way to Medford, where it was snowing lightly as we checked in.

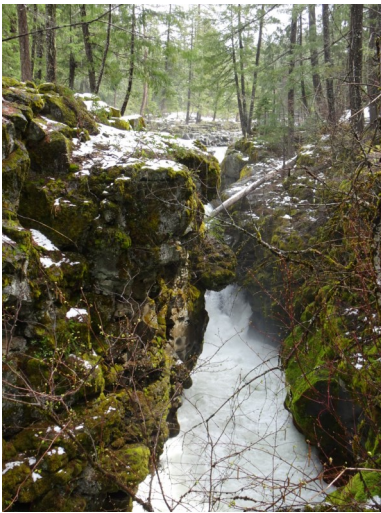
The weather cleared after a while, so I was able to get in a 3-mile walk before dinner. We ate at Porters (an old railroad station) and had a very good meal – as we had last time we stayed in Medford!

Tuesday May 10

We checked out and had breakfast at the Big Bear Diner before starting north to Hood River. It was raining as we drove out of the city and started to climb towards Crater Lake. We stopped at a beautiful over-



look above the raging Rogue River as it passed through a narrow gorge. The ground here was covered with about 2 inches of snow and the temperature was barely above freezing. We continued to the north of Crater Lake and went through several snow squalls and areas where there was a substantial coverage at the roadsides – several feet in places.



We stopped at a Starbucks in Bend, where the weather was now sunny and much warmer – in the fifties. Continuing north, the weather continued to improve, although the temperature fluctuated with elevation from the mid-thirties (30F was the lowest we saw all day) to the mid-sixties by the time we reached Hood River. We had some



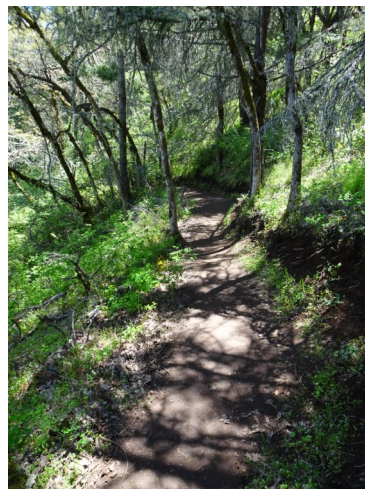
tremendous views of Mt Hood and Mt St Helens as well as others in the chain in central Oregon.



We arrived at the hotel about 5pm and I had time for a short walk before dinner at the 3 Rivers, where we have eaten on a number of occasions. Tonight, we ate inside (normally we have dined on the patio) as it was still a little chilly. The food and service were very good.

Wednesday May 11

We had breakfast sitting on the hotel restaurant deck on a beautiful sunny morning. The temperature was below 50F, but it felt very pleasant in the sun. After breakfast we drove east to the Rowena lookout above the Columbia River. Molly walked around the parking area and I took a 4-mile round trip to the top of the McCall Point, an elevation gain of 1300 feet. It was quite tough (as I found out the last time we were here) but I made it in less than two hours.



A beautiful day for a walk.....



..... or two!

We returned to Hood River for a Starbucks lunch and then returned to Rowena for another, shorter walk (2.6 miles round trip) across a lovely meadow overlooking the river.

We returned to the hotel about 4:15 and relaxed until our 7:30 dinner reservation at Celilo. The hostess greeted us like old friends and not only remembered that it had been a year since our last visit but also knew the tables we liked! It was a great meal.

Thursday May 12

It was overcast and threatening rain as we had breakfast in the hotel (inside, today). We both managed to get our walks done before the rain started in earnest. In the early afternoon we drove to the Rowena overlook again – but this time we sat in the car and napped! We returned to the hotel about 2:45 and stayed indoors until our 7:30 dinner reservation at Celilo again. Unfortunately, tonight they fell short and due to a series of missteps by the waiter, we left without a main course. (I did get a letter of apology from the manager the next day).

Friday May 13

We had breakfast in the hotel again and then checked out. We drove across the bridge into Washington State and along the north side of the Columbia as far as Kennesaw. Here we stopped for coffee and then turned north, then east and finally north again to Spokane. The ride along the river was amazing but the scenery heading north was equally impressive – if totally different. We were driving through farmland with immense fields of wheat and other crops and the landscape was a beautiful green

apart from a few spots where the old crops had been harvested and new had not been planted or had not yet greened. We were climbing most of the way and, as we approached Spokane, we could once again see snow capped peaks in the distance. It was a very pleasant drive and we arrived at the Davenport Hotel about 4:30, giving me time for a short walk and time to clean up for dinner.



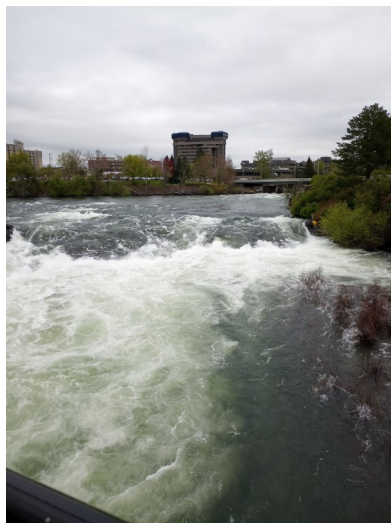
Tonight, we ate at Anthony's overlooking the Spokane Falls. It was an excellent meal with good service and a great ambiance. We returned to the hotel for a nightcap.

Saturday May 14

After breakfast in the hotel, we decided to take a drive to Mt Spokane State Park a little over an hour's drive north of the city. We had read that there were a number of trails of varying difficulty, so we were hoping to get in a walk or two. However, it turned out that we were "between seasons" in that the snowmobiling was over, but the trails were still snow covered. It was also quite misty as we climbed to about 4500 feet. So, I managed a couple of short walks on a muddy track and in packed snow before we returned to the city, stopping for a Starbucks lunch.



I did manage a slightly longer walk along the river once we were back in town and saw the falls and some of the fine buildings of this city





Spokane

Tonight, we ate at Churchill's, a steakhouse just around the corner from the hotel which we have enjoyed on a previous visit to Spokane. We had a very good meal with excellent service as well as a nice chat with our waiter who is originally from Perth, Australia – and recognized our accents!

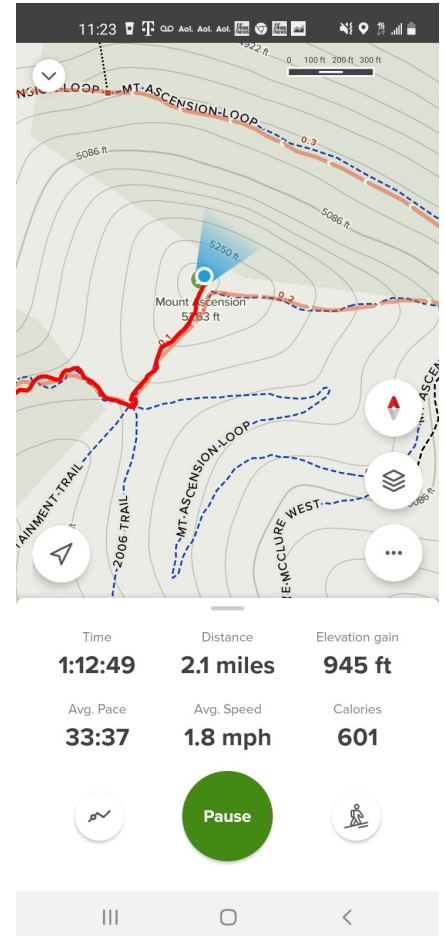
Sunday May 15

We had breakfast in the hotel and checked out before 10am and started our drive to Helena. We soon found I-90, completed the final 20 miles of Washington, crossed the Idaho pan handle (40 miles) and were then in Montana. It was a bright and mostly sunny morning as we passed through wonderful mountain scenery once again. We stopped in Missoula for a Starbucks lunch and then left I-90 to travel Routes 200 and 12 to Helena, once again through magnificent scenery. We arrived at the hotel in Helena about 5pm (Mountain time) and I took a short walk before we left for dinner. We dined at an Italian restaurant that we have eaten at on several occasions. The ambiance had changed (more family style) but the food and service were still good – and there were several Italians eating there, which we always think is a good sign.



Monday May 16

We had breakfast at a local diner (good, but far too much food) and then drove to a parking area at the base of Mt Ascension. Molly walked around at the base, and I made it to the top (5260 feet – 1250 above the starting point). It was a tough climb and not particularly easy on the way down but I got a good workout over a four-mile course.



A great walk and I made it to the summit!



After a Starbucks lunch we drove to the Flesher Summit at the Continental Divide (6131 feet) west of town. Here we had spectacular views of the mountains and we also took a nap before returning to the hotel around 4:30. Tonight, we ate at the Mediterranean Grill (another repeat) where we had an excellent tapas meal – helped considerably by suggestions from the waitress.

Tuesday May 17

We checked out and had breakfast at a local Perkins before heading south to Three Forks. We stopped at the Headwaters Park (of course) and we both took walks from the main parking lot. It was a beautiful morning with almost clear blue skies and a temperature in the mid-sixties.

Molly at the Headwaters—again!





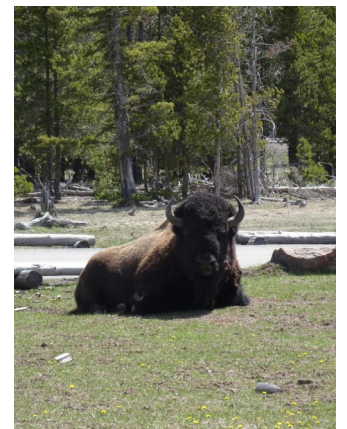
We then drove east about 20 miles before heading south towards Yellowstone. We made one stop near Four Corners for coffee and another at the side of the Gallatin River for a nap and then drove on the West Yellowstone, where we checked in shortly after 4:30. The scenery on the whole drive was once again spectacular with mountains seemingly surrounding us the entire way. The snow covering made it all the more interesting and beautiful.



Tonight, we ate at Serenity, a small restaurant we have enjoyed in the past. It was a very good meal and a nice way to top off another great day.

Wednesday May 18

We had breakfast at the Outpost (not the best!) and then entered Yellowstone Park at the west entrance. We saw many bison on the way to Madison, where we turned towards Old Faithful – taking the short, but very scenic, Firehole River Drive.





At the Biscuit Basin parking lot, we both set off on our walks, Molly around the geysers and bubbling ponds, me to take a 3-mile hike. Unfortunately, my trail was closed due to bear activity, so I had to settle for a couple of rounds on the boardwalk. Molly did one complete round for a total of about ¾ mile, which I thought was excellent. We then drove to Old Faithful, got a coffee and cookie and watched the geyser do its thing – for a crowd of several hundreds! We tried to take another loop on our return, but that road was closed also. We did make a stop at the Fountain



Paint Pot and at the Gibbon Falls (quite spectacular) and took a brief nap on Riverside Drive (overlooking the Madison River) before returning to the hotel around 4pm.



Tonight, we ate again at Serenity and enjoyed another good meal.



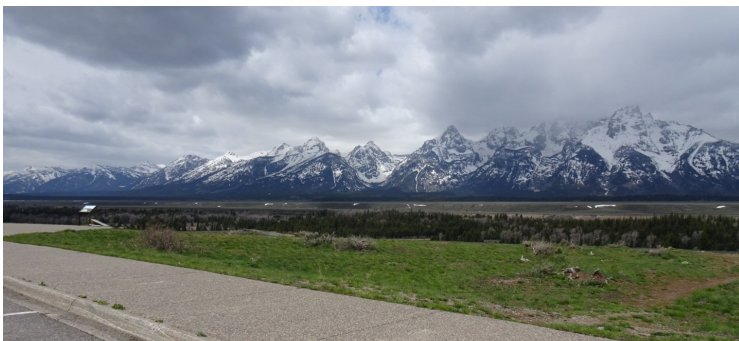
Thursday May 19n

It was very cold (thirties) as we checked out and went for breakfast at the Timberline Café. We decided against the shortest route to Idaho Falls and opted for a much longer drive via Jackson Hole. We entered Yellowstone Park and drove east to Madison, during which time we saw a huge herd of bison as they held up traffic while they crossed the road. We estimate that there were at least fifty, and probably closer to 100. We got a good view as they were only a few cars in front of us. Interestingly, when we started moving again, there was absolutely no sign of this huge gathering – they had simply disappeared into the trees.



erally brightened, and we got some neared Jackson Hole.

We crossed the Continental Divide twice before reaching West Thumb and once more as we headed south towards the Tetons. We went through a few snow squalls (most notably at the place we had intended to stop for a walk!) but the day gen-great views of the Tetons, particularly as we



We didn't find a coffee shop in Jackson, so we started up the Teton Pass to an elevation of just over 8000 feet as we reached the Idaho border. We stopped for coffee in a small town (Victor) and then continued generally west towards Idaho Falls. The wind increased significantly and at first, we thought we were headed into a rainstorm. In fact, the sky

was filled with dust and dirt whipped up by the howling winds which made driving a little treacherous. We stopped in a rest area for a nap and then continued our journey to Idaho Falls. It was still very windy, but I managed a short walk before dinner at the Copper Rill. We had eaten there a couple of years ago and tonight we had an excellent meal with very good service. We had a nice chat with the waitress who had attended the University of Cincinnati (mostly online). The scenery today was absolutely magnificent throughout with views of high mountains in every direction.

Friday May 20

We had breakfast at a local diner and then started our journey to Salt Lake City. We again opted for a longer route rather than I-15 all the way and had picked out an area on the Snake River (near American Falls) to take a walk. It was still cool (below 50F) and there was still a stiff breeze, but the sun made it feel comfortable and we both enjoyed our walks. This new-found interest in picking an area to stop where we can both take a walk has become something of a habit and has opened up a whole new opportunity to add interest to our driving trips.



The drive from our stop to Salt Lake was another three hours, first through rolling farmland (very green), then through an area that could have been Derbyshire, and eventually about 100 miles of expressway. The first section in northern Utah was very pleasant with one high pass and even when we started south on I-15 we had great views of the mountains to the left of the expressway. Traffic became relatively heavy, of course, but kept moving and we checked into the Marriott in downtown Salt Lake before 5pm.

Tonight, we had our final dinner for this trip at Spencer's, a very short walk from our hotel. We have had mixed results at this restaurant over the years but tonight we both enjoyed the food and service.

Saturday May 21

We were up by 6:30 and sitting in the SkyClub at SLC shortly after 7:30. It was a beautiful morning and the flight was on time so, after a great west coast driving trip, we are now ready for Cameron's 20th birthday dinner!

