

Colorado and Utah

November 2023



Bob and Molly Hillery

Utah and Colorado, November 2023

Wednesday November 8

We left home about 4:30pm and drove to the airport. We parked in the Fast Park lot and were soon checked in and through Security before having a pre-departure drink in the SkyClub.

The flight to Salt Lake City left on time at 7:30 and we had a smooth flight and good meal before landing at 9:30 local time. We quickly got our bags and the rental car and were checked in at the Marriott downtown before 10:30 pm.

Thursday November 9

We were up about 8 and had breakfast in the lounge before packing and checking out for our drive to Grand Junction. It was a beautiful morning with clear blue skies. It was just a degree or two above freezing as we left Salt Lake and drove south on I-15. The expressway was busy through the Salt Lake conurbation and past Provo (about 50 miles) but was a lot more peaceful and pleasant as we headed east on Route 6. This was a mostly four-lane highway but was not heavily trafficked, so driving was easy.

It was also beautiful scenery, with deep canyons and sweeping vistas towards the mountains and, later, across high desert lands. Where there were trees, they were mostly conifers, but the few deciduous trees were about the same color "level" as we had left in Cincinnati – that is, a little past their best but still very colorful.



We stopped in the town of

Price, about 150 miles on the

route and found a Starbucks for a light lunch. We then continued on Route 6 through mostly desert terrain (with mountains across the valley to the north and south) until it merged into I-70. We followed this through rolling terrain at the north end of the canyonlands region, into Colorado and to our hotel on Main Street, Grand Junction.

A stop on Route 6, previously visited by Butch Cassidy!

The temperature had reached the mid-fifties and the skies continued to be clear, so I went for a short walk along the historic main street of town before relaxing until dinner time. Tonight, we ate at a restaurant called the Devil's Kitchen which we had found online. Its starter menu seemed interesting, but the mains were limited so we wondered exactly what we would find. It turned out to be a very nice meal (the menu was far more extensive than we had thought) in very nice surroundings on the fourth (top) floor of a big hotel.

Friday November 10 (My 82nd birthday)

We drove less than ½ mile to breakfast at the Pufferbelly Station restaurant, not too surprisingly next to the railroad station. Following that, we drove to the east entrance of the Colorado national Monument. It was another beautiful, clear day – which started out cool (low thirties) but climbed to the mid-fifties. We spent about five hours in the park driving the full length of the Rimrock Drive, which hugs the canyon at an elevation between 5000 and 7000 feet.

I took two decent-length walks during which I warmed sufficiently to take off my sweater and continue in short sleeves. There were spots in the shade where it felt a little chilly but usually we were warm enough. This must have been our fifth or sixth (maybe more) visit to the Monument and we are always amazed at the rock formations and the extent to which water can carve such huge clefts in the landscape. It was a wonderful way to spend my birthday.



Along the Trail



Along the Rim



Tonight, we went to dinner at The Winery, less than 0.5 miles from the hotel. This was a super restaurant in what appeared to have been an old warehouse or maybe a house. The food and service were excellent.

Saturday November 11

We were up soon after 8am and checked out of the hotel by 8:30. We had breakfast at a local iHop and then started our journey to Moab. We drove west on I-70 for about 40 miles and then turned in a southwesterly direction on Utah Route 198 that soon took us alongside the Colorado River. It was another beautiful drive with the river in view most of the way and the high cliffs and ridges of the "backside" of Arches National Park to our right-hand side.



***On the road to
Arches***

We arrived at Arches Park about 11am and spent over four hours in the absolutely amazing region of monoliths and rocks shaped into every imaginable shape by millennia of winds. There are, of course, many arches of every size and shape but the entire park (probably 25 miles of roads) is filled with red and gray sculptures. We took several short walks at various scenic lookout areas and had another cool but bright day.



Arches National Park



Interestingly, we had tried at the Colorado National Monument yesterday to buy an annual pass (we had both left our lifetime passes at home!!) but neither of the gates nor the Visitor Center were manned with personnel able to do so. Then today, at Arches, we were told that no entrance fees were required as it is Veterans' Day – so we have visited two superb parks at no cost!

We arrived at our hotel in Moab before 3:30 and immediately made a dinner reservation at a local steakhouse. It was less than two miles from the hotel and, although the service was quite leisurely, the food and drinks were good.

Sunday November 12

We were up and checked out of the hotel before 8:30 and shortly afterwards we were eating breakfast at the Jailhouse Café (“a great place for your last meal”!) We then started our relatively long drive to Zion National Park, about 5 hours away.

The first 150 miles or more (mostly along I-70) were once again spectacular with mountain ranges (two passes at almost 8000 feet), mesas of every shape and size, rock pillars and jagged peaks and many different colors from deep red to white. In that total distance we passed one town and virtually all the rest of that route was through high desert with no signs of civilization. It was another reminder not only how big this country is but just how much of it is completely undeveloped. The only sign of human intervention was the road on which we were traveling.

We stopped in the town of Richfield for a Starbucks “lunch” and shortly afterwards left I-70 to head south on US Route 89. The land here was much more cultivated (feed for cattle mainly) and green. There were a few very small hamlets, but otherwise we were in very sparsely inhabited land again. This continued until we passed the turnoff to Bryce Canyon, at which point we joined another of Utah's scenic byways for the last 70 miles to Zion. We turned off Route 89 at Mt Carmel (where we have stayed on several occasions) to complete the final 30 miles.

It had been another spectacular day (scenery and weather – with a high of 70F) and it was capped by the magnificent 12-mile descent (1300 feet elevation change) switchback road to the canyon floor and the hub of Springdale, almost within Zion National Park. In fact, we had passed in and out of the park as we approached the hotel and (at last!) were able to buy our annual pass.

I went for a short walk in town in the late afternoon sun and we made dinner reservations at two nearby restaurants for tonight and tomorrow. Tonight's was a steakhouse and, with an entrance via the gift shop, we weren't expecting much in the way of ambiance. However, the restaurant resembled many in park lodges – high ceilings and a huge window –



so was very attractive. In addition, the food and service matched the ambiance, so we had a very pleasant evening.

Monday, November 13

We were up about 8:30 and went to breakfast at Meme's, a quarter mile from the hotel, and where we had eaten on our last visit. Unlike the last time, however, there was no wait and we were one of only two parties inside.

Around 10:30, we left the hotel and took the town shuttle bus to the Visitor Center and from there, the Canyon Shuttle to the extreme north end of the valley. We were surprised that there was quite a queue at the interchange, so it was almost noon by the time we started walking.



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time.

Tonight, we went to the Italian restaurant just across the lot from our hotel and attached to the steakhouse we had enjoyed last night – they are both in the same small chain. It was a very good meal with excellent service – and a grappa to finish!

Tuesday November 14

We checked out soon after 8:30 and went to Meme's again for breakfast. We then drove up I-15 all the way to Salt Lake City, with just one stop for a Starbucks lunch. The Interstate was surprisingly busy, but traffic kept moving and we were checked in at the downtown Marriott by 2:30.

I went for a short walk to check on progress with the temple renovations (slow, still a long way to go) and then we relaxed until dinner at Spencer's, just a short walk from the hotel. Unlike the last few times we have been here, the restaurant was packed which reflected some in the service. Nevertheless, it was a nice way to spend our last night out on this trip.

Wednesday November 15

We left the hotel and turned in the car before having a light breakfast in the airport lounge. Our flight left on time, was smooth and we arrived in Cincinnati on time. The car didn't start immediately, but the jumper device worked and we were home in time for dinner at Clyborne after a very nice week-long break.

Molly took a short walk at the first stop while I went as far as the Narrows (on the Virgin River) for a total of a little over two miles. When I got back, Molly had left so I took the next bus a couple of stops down the canyon and went for another walk (one mile) that took me to Zion Lodge – where Molly was just finishing coffee.

We both took the shuttle to Canyon Junction where I got off and walked as far as the Visitor Center. Molly had arrived on the bus, done some shopping and was waiting for the town shuttle back to the hotel. I decided to walk this last mile or so, so we arrived back at the hotel only a few minutes apart around 3pm. We drove for a late afternoon coffee (sitting outside in 70F weather) and then returned to the hotel to rest until dinner



