

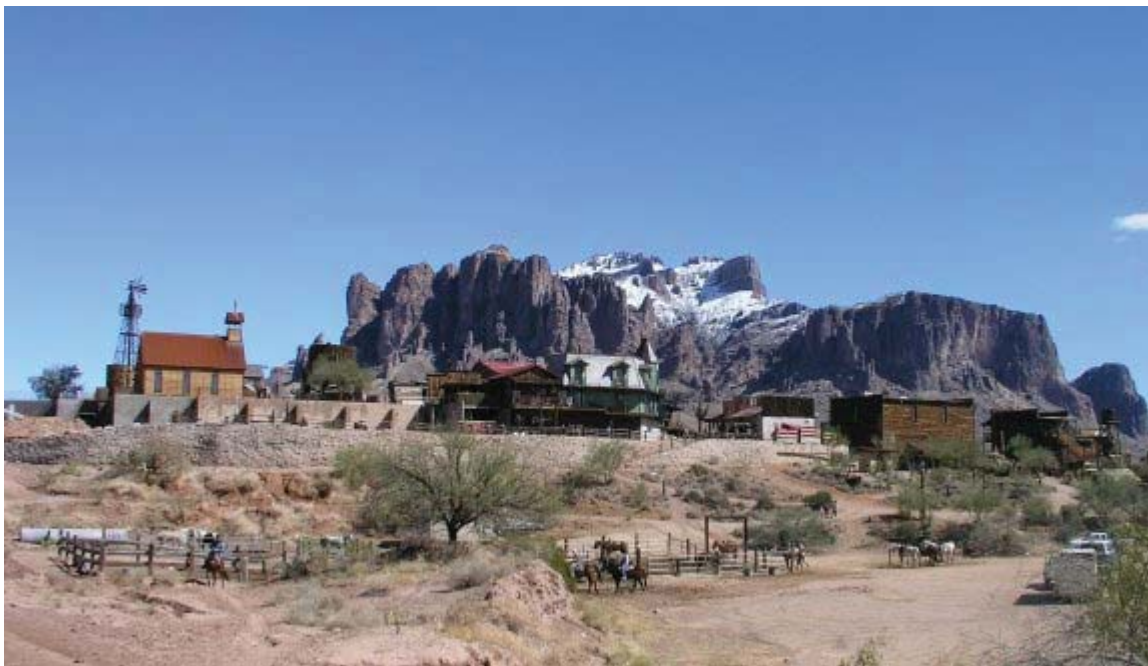
Greetings from **Apache Junction, Arizona**. We beat a big snowstorm in the higher mountains and came down to a very nice Elks Lodge in Apache Junction. By good fortune the Elks Lodge is right on **Highway 88**, which is part of the **Apache Trail Loop**. We only got a trace of snow at the lodge, but the mountains all around were full of snow and extremely beautiful. Looking out our windshield, we had an absolutely gorgeous view of the desert with the snow capped **Superstition Mountains** in the background. The storm had knocked out power at the Elks Lodge so there was no dinner, but the candlelit bar was fun and romantic. After driving and fueling the motorhome in pouring rain, it was good to be dry and camped at the lodge.

You may remember that the Superstition Mountains is the home of **Jacob Waltz's Lost Dutchman Mine**. Jacob was German and struck it rich, but unfortunately he came out of the mountains very ill. A woman tried to nurse him back to health, but failed. As he died, he gave her a map and said, "find my mine and you will be the richest woman in Arizona." She found 46 pounds of gold under his bed and so she had reason to believe that he was telling the truth. She spent the rest of her life looking for the mine and never found it. To this day, people are still searching without success.



Superstition Mountains at Elks Lodge in Apache Junction.

We also had the good fortune of learning that our old Chico friends, **Robert and Natalia**, were now on the road with a 5th wheel and were parked nearby in Mesa, Arizona. Robert and Natalia picked us up in their car and we drove all 130 miles of the Apache Trail Loop. What a trip. We only had to go a few miles to encounter the mining ghost town of **Goldfield**, which is now a tourist attraction.



Goldfield ghost town seen from the narrow gauge railroad.

From Goldfield, the Apache Trail goes to **Canyon Lake**. It's a bit of a surprise to see this lake in a very dry desert. There had not been rain in this area for 143 days. On Sunday, after the snowstorm, Highway 88 (just a two lane road) was bumper to bumper traffic. At first, we couldn't understand why until we realized that the people from Phoenix and Mesa were coming to see snow. They were so enthralled to have snowball fights that they were taking snow home in coolers and the back of pick up trucks.



Canyon Lake, Arizona.

The next stop was **Tortilla Flat** which was at one time a stagecoach stop. Tortilla Flat has an interesting bar and restaurant with an outside patio and an outstanding three piece band. We got a hamburger, beer, and listened to the music for an hour. Tortilla Flat is as far as anybody with brains goes since it is the end of the pavement. It's a small town with maybe a dozen people living there. The town is small, but one of the locals sure wasn't. The gentleman below was 7'2" without his hat.



Donna and citizen of Tortilla Flat.

Well, the four of us said, "let's go on." So we headed up into the snowy mountains on a wet, narrow dirt road. It was quite scary at times, but the scenery made it all worth it. Very deep red rock canyons, cliffs and snow. The road started out pretty good and sucked us in. It goes right over the snowy mountains shown below.



Start of the dirt portion of the Apache Trail Loop.



One of the rock walls seen from the bottom.

Looking down into some of the canyons, you could easily see why some people refer to this area as "The Little Grand Canyon." Some of the drop offs were a good thousand feet down. Unfortunately, we didn't get good pictures looking down.

The next stop was **Apache Lake** which was very pretty and has a marina, resort, and RV park.



Apache Lake.

After hours, or maybe it just seemed like hours, we finally got to **Roosevelt Dam** and **Roosevelt Lake** and a good paved road. All of the Apache Trail Loop is contained within Tonto National Forest. Right near Roosevelt Dam is Tonto National Monument. Chuck had hoped to stop there and visit with the office staff as he had done a consulting job there many, many years ago. Unfortunately, it was much too late and everything was closed up.

Once we hit the pavement, we cut a trail back to Apache Junction. By this time, it was dark and we were tired. We are glad we made the loop, but we wouldn't do it a second time. Next time we'll start in the reverse direction and spend a few days in and around Roosevelt Lake.

After six days in Apache Junction, most of the snow melted. The clean crisp air deteriorated into smog and the intense beauty was gone. Well, time to pack up and head back up into the mountains. But that will be another story.

Until next time, home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna