

Greetings from **Saint David, Arizona**.

We haven't been touring as much as usual since income tax preparation and annuity sales have been taking serious amounts of time. When you last heard from us, we were in Earp, California, on a very beautiful section of the Colorado River called the Parker strip. Just before we left the river, we were able to track down our old Redding friends, **Dave and Beth**. They have become full time RVers and spent the entire winter on the river.

After leaving the river, we headed for **Gila Bend**, Arizona, and a very nice little park called Augie's Quail Trail RV Park. Now, normally, Gila Bend might be an overnight stop at the local Elk's Lodge, but this time we stayed there 5 nights. What, 5 nights in Gila Bend? No, we haven't tripped out. We were there for the annual 2-Way Satellite User's Rally. We had hoped to learn more about our brand new computer satellite, and learn we did. What a wonderful group. The rally only cost us \$10 each and that included breakfast every day. There are some incredibly knowledgeable people in the group who freely donate their time to help newbies like us.

From Gila Bend we went to **Casino del Sol** in **Tucson**. This gave us the opportunity to track down some special dog food for Annika. Tucson, like everywhere else we have been this year, was cold and even a little rainy.

Then it was off to **Benson**, Arizona. Our intention was to settle into Valley Vista RV Resort for two weeks and just work on taxes. But there was a snag. We both got the flu and were seriously ill for about 10 days. When our two weeks was up, we were too sick to move and so we bought another week there. Happily, we got to spend an evening with our old friends, **Robert and Natalia** from Chico, California, before we became ill. We also had the opportunity to see **Earl and Virginia** from Sonora, California, and **Nullet and Sandi**. We also had the opportunity to visit with **Bob and Kathy** from Denver, but we had to pass or we would have given them the flu. One of the really wonderful parts of this nomadic lifestyle is the opportunity to spend time with old friends and to make new ones!

After three weeks in Benson, we moved about five miles down the road to Western Horizons Resort at **Saint David**, Arizona. We love this park. It has two beautiful lakes, a lovely club house, and a constant stream of fun activities. Donna has worked very hard on taxes and so we rented a Chevy "rollerskate" for three days and went off to see the local sights.



Chuck and the "rollerskate" at Chiricahua National Monument.

Last year, we spent time in Tombstone and Bisbee as well as Nogales. This year, we went to **Cochise's Stronghold** in the Dragoon Mountains, and then to **Willcox**.



Cochise Stonghold in Coronado National Forest (Dragoon Mountains).

Chasing Cochise into this very rugged canyon would likely be a big mistake. Cochise was actually a fairly peaceful Indian Chief until he was erroneously accused of stealing horses. Following that charge, a brash young military officer attempted to arrest him. This was a serious mistake and resulted in eleven years of war.



Cochise Stronghold in the Dragoon Mountains of Arizona.

After Cochise Stronghold, we drove to the town of Willcox, Arizona, looked around, ate some so-so pork ribs in a railroad car and then had the best darn homemade ice cream in a little ice cream store next to the rib place.

When we left Willcox, we drove to **Roper Lake State Park** to see Bob and Kathy. Unfortunately, they had already left. Well, okay, it's sort of an interesting state park in the middle of nowhere. If you want to sit on a lake and do nothing, this is probably the place for you. We left the park and headed back to Saint David. It was a long day of driving, but we had rented a car for three days so it was much easier than the same trip on a motorcycle.

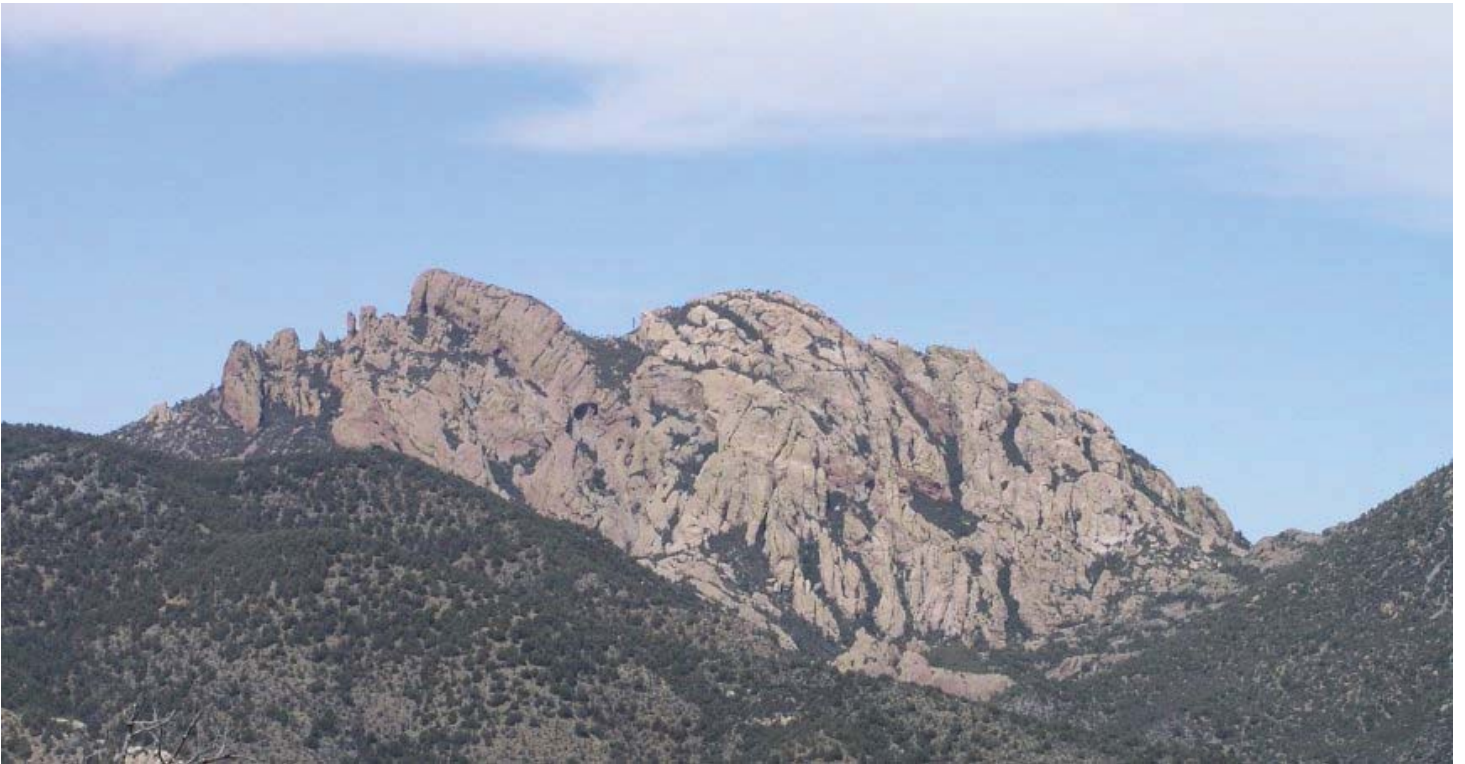
The next day, we hopped in the rental car and headed for **Chiricahua National Monument**. This park is extremely interesting and has a long history. It's also very beautiful and a wonderful place to go hiking. The interpretive center is quite good and there is a great tour of the Faraway Ranch house. Man o man, those early settlers were mighty tough and resourceful. It was called Faraway Ranch because it was God-awful far away from anything.

From the early 1400s, southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico have been home to the Chiricahua Apaches. Of the four main bands, the Chokonen band lived in and around the Chiricahua Mountains. They were traditionally nomadic, hunting large game and gathering edible plants. Superb warriors, feared and respected by neighboring tribes, the apaches fought relentlessly against European colonization beginning with the Spanish in the 1500s. They quickly learned to handle horses and weapons acquired from the newcomers. After Mexican independence in 1821 and encroachment by settlers and miners, a state of war existed. Led by Cochise and Geronimo, they raided pioneer settlements but were never able to stem the tide. In 1886, the Chiricahua Apaches surrendered. Ultimately they were settled on reservations in Oklahoma and New Mexico.



Chiricahua National Monument. The "Land of Standing Up Rocks."

As you enter Chiricahua National Monument, you are climbing up a "sky island," an isolated mountain range rising above the surrounding grassland "sea." The Chiricahua Apache called these pinnacles "standing up rocks."



"Cochise Head" in Chiricahua National Monument.

The colossal rock profile in the distance takes the shape of a man's head, a man lying serenely on his back. His face is rugged and noble, with a long, curved nose and a domed forehead. For an eyelash -- a 100-foot Douglas fir.



Faraway Ranch in Chiricahua National Monument.

Swedish immigrants, Neil and Emma Erickson, settled here in 1888. By the 1920s, their eldest daughter, Lillian, and her husband, Ed Riggs, had turned the homestead into a guest ranch. From 1917 until 1973, visitors came to relax, watch birds, and hike in the hills.

The third day with the rental car took us to the town of **Douglas** on the Mexican border to see the famous old Gadsden Hotel. The hotel was interesting and the marble staircase is a thing of beauty. Unfortunately, there is not much else to see in Douglas. We walked across the border and had lunch in the tired Mexican town of **Agua Prieta**. There is not much to see there either.



Marble staircase in the Gadsden Hotel, Douglas, Arizona.

From Douglas, we drove to **Sierra Vista**, Arizona, to see the **Coronado National Memorial**. This is an interesting stop with a nice and free interpretive center. You can also drive up a steep and narrow dirt road to **Montezuma's Pass**. From the top, you have a heck of a view of Sonora, Mexico to the south and the San Pedro Valley to the east.



The view of the San Pedro Valley from Montezuma Pass.



The view of Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico from Montezuma Pass.

The Coronado National Memorial was named after Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado who was leading his expedition to find the seven cities of gold in 1540-42 over this pass. Yep, you guessed it. There were no cities of gold and the expedition was considered a total failure.

Well, that's the touring news for now. There are still three tourist attractions we would like to see: 1. **The Buffalo Soldier Museum** on the grounds of Fort Huachuca Military base in Sierra Vista; 2. **Kartchner Caverns** which are about 10 miles south of Benson, Arizona; and 3. **Gammons Gulch**, a ghost town movie set which is about 15 miles north of Benson. We are leaving this area on March 21 and we don't know if we'll see these sights or not.

TRAVEL PLANS

March 21 to April 4, Hidden Valley Ranch RV Resort, Deming, New Mexico.

April 4 to April 5, Escapees (Saguaro) RV Park, Benson, Arizona.

April 5 to April 19, Western Horizons Resort at Casa Grande, Arizona.

After Casa Grande it is our plan to head back north into California. It's quite possible that Casa Grande will be too hot and we will leave there early. Either way, we will be heading toward Redding, California.

BUSINESS

If you'd like to talk to us about income taxes or estate planning, please give us a call. We never charge for information and advice.

Until next time, home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna Cole
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