



In Search of Eldorado



Along the shore of the Colorado River

Day 22
Saturday
January 26th
Pierce Ferry
To
Kingman, Arizona

Weather
Great today. 60's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends

Short day today. I took the bike back down to the boat launch at the Colorado River for the picture above.



It's interesting how water runoff creates its own Little Grand Canyon on its way to the real Colorado.

It was about a 5 mile round trip, mostly level. Glad I took gloves along, that north wind was chilly. Sorry, not like the chilly you have back home.

Eldorado

By Edgar Allen Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

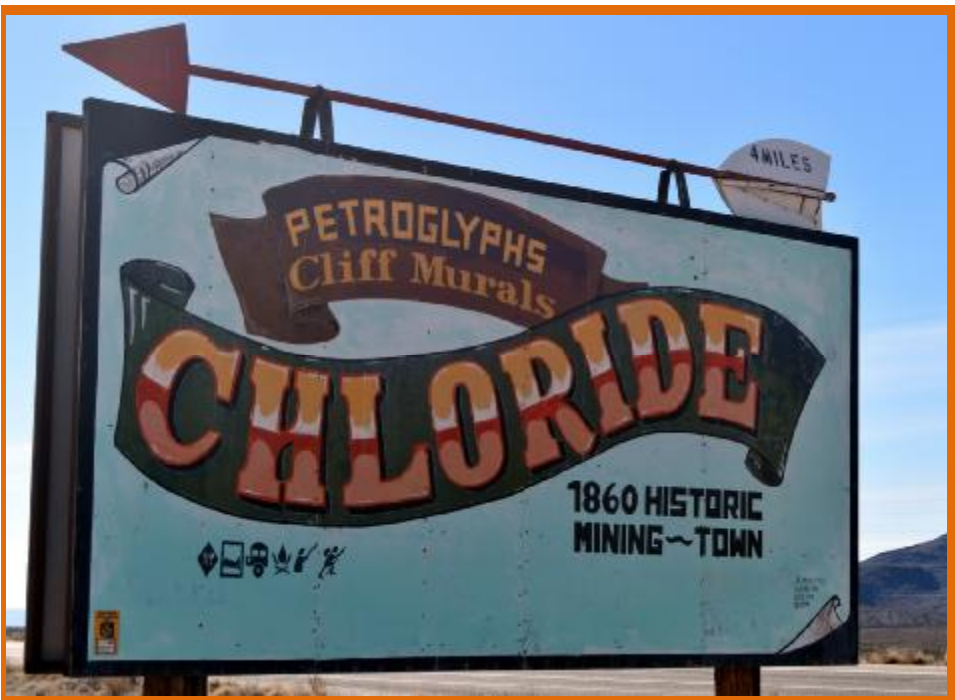


On the way back I stopped to take a picture of the RV and the remoteness of my camp. It is pretty hard to see, but follow the arrow. Last night before the sun set I climbed to the top of the ridge behind camp. That's the arrow to the right. Yesterday I took a photo of the Egyptian mountains to the south. The pic below is the same spot but looking north to Lake Mead. Quite a contrast in scenery.

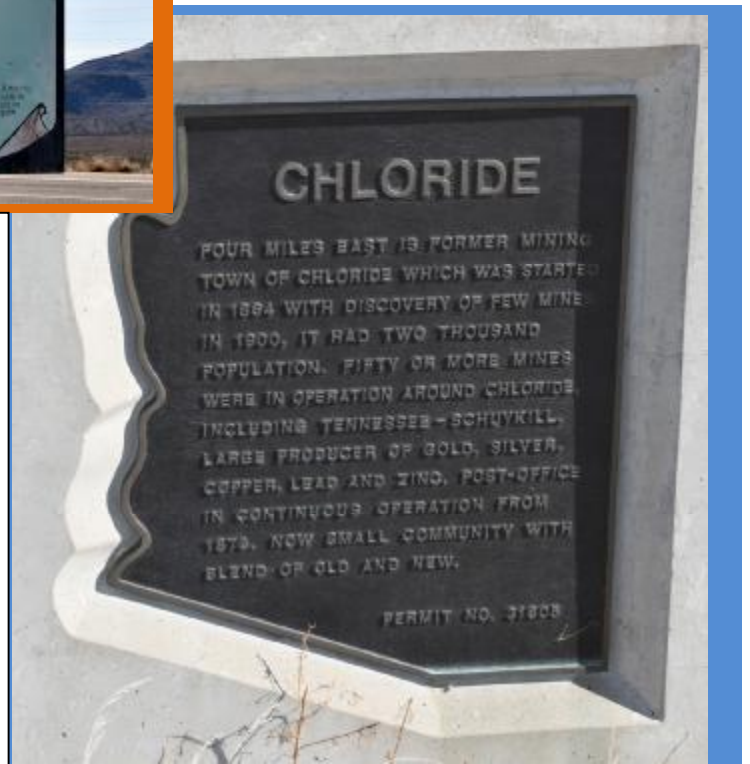




I wanted to take a side trip to the ghost town of Cyclopic. Cyclopic was the village of residence for the workers in the nearby mine of the same name. The Village and mine petered out in 1917. I did not like the looks of the road so decided to pass it by.



Chloride was founded in 1862 with the discovery of silver ore. During its heyday, there were more than 75 mines in operation, and the population reached 2,000 in 1920. There are still a few mines in operation, but the main income is from tourism. I'm not exactly sure what they expect. I know it's January, but it was Saturday. All the shops were closed except the bar and the Tourist Info Center. The lady there was very nice and knowledgeable about the town. I used her map and took a walking tour which maybe consisted of 12 or 13 blocks.





They have this little boomtown set-up where they hold gunfights the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month. Kinda corny, but I did get a kick (pun intended) out of the saloon to the right. Note the "one holer" far right.



This ancient gas station was a little strange. You can see the train tracks which make about 60% of a circle around this yard.



This was the original jail and at one time was open to the public. Unfortunately they found someone sleeping/living in it and had to lock it up. There is a small window in the door for checking out the inside.





I thought this was the most interesting building in town, the Train Depot. Of course I am a train guy, but you can still see the original railroad ties from where the track was laid.

I had on my list to see the rock murals painted by Roy Purcell and some ancient petroglyphs near that, but they were 1.5 miles down a very bumpy dirt road. The tourist info lady advised me against it. I crossed the cattle guard to get there but turned around almost immediately after seeing an ATV coming towards me going very slow.



You'll find no shortage of ghost towns along Route 66, but one of the strangest by far has to be the abandoned town of Santa Claus, Arizona. Once a bustling, year-round holiday-themed stop for road tripping motorists, its glory days are long past.





It's mostly inhabited by rattlesnakes (the last thing you'd expect to find in a place called "Santa Claus", right?) and is probably the farthest thing from "festive" that you can imagine. But, Santa Claus wasn't always this run-down... in fact, it was once one of the most popular stops along the Mother Road.

Santa Claus was founded in 1937 by an eccentric realtor named Nina Talbot who moved from California to Arizona.

She hoped to create a resort town in the Arizona desert, and, inexplicably, gave her destination town a Christmas theme, naming it "Santa Claus, Arizona". Her plan was for the holiday-themed attractions to bring people to the town, and, weirdly enough, her idea worked... for awhile, anyways.

The Swiss chalet-inspired Cinderella's Doll House and the Santa Claus Inn (later renamed the Christmas Tree Inn) were two of the town's most popular attractions. Kids could sit on Santa's lap all year round, and the Inn became famous for its rum pie a la Kris Kringle. Road-weary travelers in the 1940's and 1950's were glad to pull over in Santa Claus to enjoy a home-cooked meal in the air conditioned restaurant and have their kids burn off some energy visiting the holiday-themed attractions.

The most popular feature of the town was the post office: it was especially popular for parents to send their children's letters to Santa to the town, so they would come back postmarked "from Santa Claus".

By the 1970's, the popularity of Route 66 was waning, and the town of Santa Claus was struggling. The main attractions closed by the mid-70's, and the town was removed from maps of Arizona. Because the town never attracted residents beyond those who worked in the attractions, it was abandoned when the roadside stops shut down.

Today, instead of Christmas elves, rum pie, and snowmen, you'll find poisonous snakes, and not much else in Santa Claus. There are a few abandoned buildings that, past the barbed wire and underneath layers of graffiti, still retain a touch of their former festive candy cane paint. But I guess that's what happens when you stop believing in Santa Claus...

Thanks to Anna Hider of Destination Strange for that history of Santa Claus, AZ



My camping spot for the night. On the internet it is referred to as "Just Off HWY 93".



I stopped at a Flying J in Kingman to refuel, add DEF (diesel exhaust fluid) and fill the water tank. I should be good to go for awhile now. The next couple days I will be touring Kingman, AZ. Museums, Route 66, trains, a distillery, a wagon trail and many other sites. I am looking forward to it.

Until then....