



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

I slept better than expected, which means I arose later than planned. Makes no difference. The only reason to get started earlier is to avoid some of the higher temps.

I did NOT go back to the VC for another permit. I did drive out to the South Palm Basin, which is only ten miles from Salton City and HWY 86, which is the road I took on the west side of the Salton Sea almost two weeks ago. Doesn't seem like I'm making much progress west does it?

After passing it by once I found the trailhead, backed in the RV, did not see a sign telling me a day pass was required, geared up, and crossed the street where I found the plaque below.

Staying on Target

World War II jacket patch featuring the optical gun sight



Flying Tiger Antiques
www.flyingtigerantiques.com

Day 27
Wednesday,
January 29th

Santa Rosa and San
Jacinto Mountains NM
To
Anzo-Borrega Desert
State Park

Weather
50's to 70's and Sunny

In Search of 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!'



In addition to its varied habitats and landscapes, this desert hosts several valuable natural resources, including minerals. For a brief time (1942 to 1944), one mineral played a pivotal role in World War II.

Gemologist John Hilton dabbled in art, zoology, botany, and geology. He was intrigued by the "series of colored rings" he'd observed in a disc of rare, high-grade calcite—a mineral found in ample quantities on his land in Borrego Valley.

The mineral (called rainbow calcite or Icelandic spar), free of impurities and as clear as glass, played with light rays. "I held the center ring on a fixed target," he wrote, "and moved my head from side to side. I was amazed to see that the center of the sight stayed right on the target."

The implications for military application were obvious. The Polaroid Corporation, a military supplier, bought and mined Hilton's land to make their revolutionary Optical Ring Gun Sight, used by the US Navy.



The dirt wash road is just under a mile long before you get to the real foot trail. I passed a group of six coming back, but otherwise had the place to myself. The wind was really nasty today, 20-30 MPH with gusts up to 50. At times it felt like I was standing in front of a sand blaster. I spent most of the hike on the road holding my hat on my head.



I am very pleased to inform you that I encountered no garbage along the dirt road. The only piece I saw was that white napkin in the middle of the trail

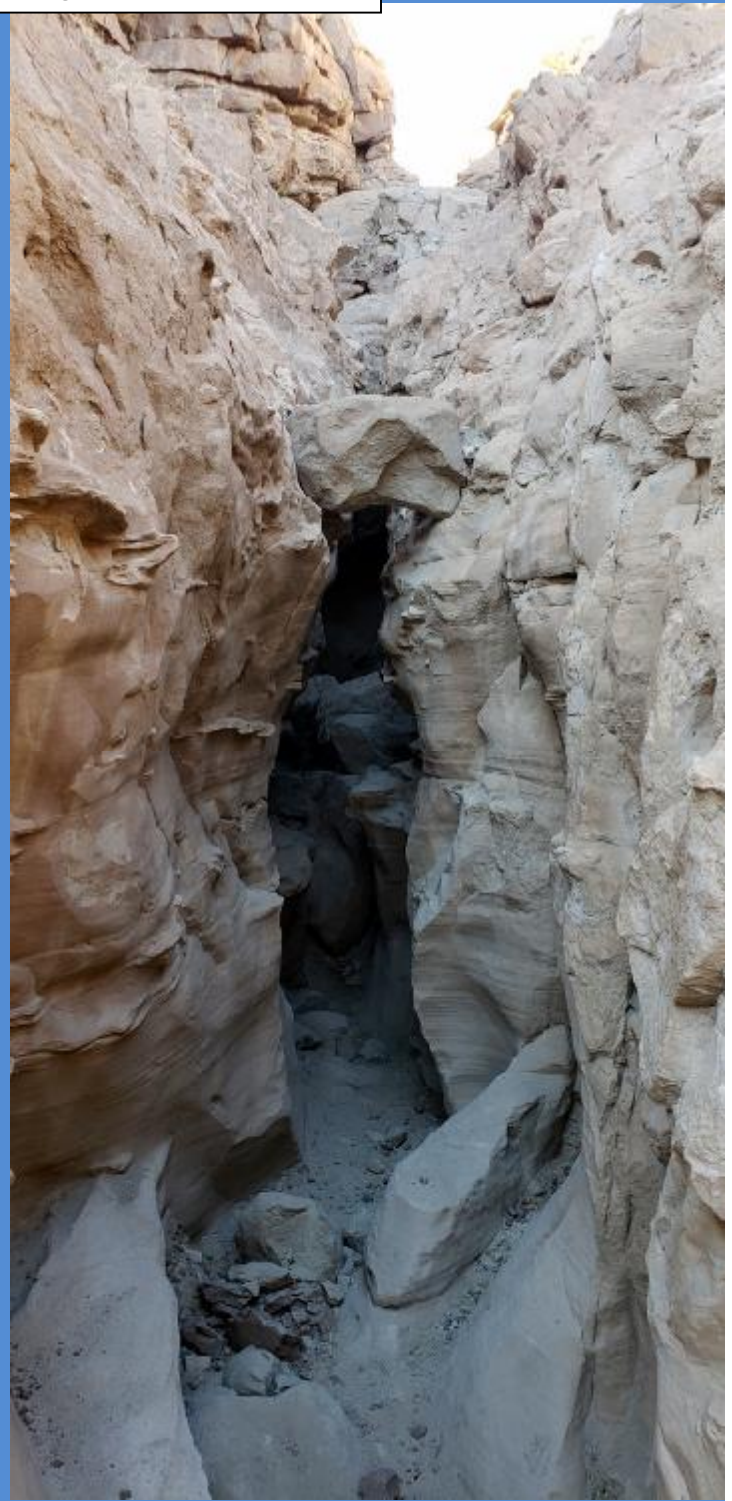


This natural bridge was only about 120' up the trail from the sign above. The ranger had mentioned a natural bridge on this trail, I just thought it would be farther along. But that's ok, there are still surprises to come.

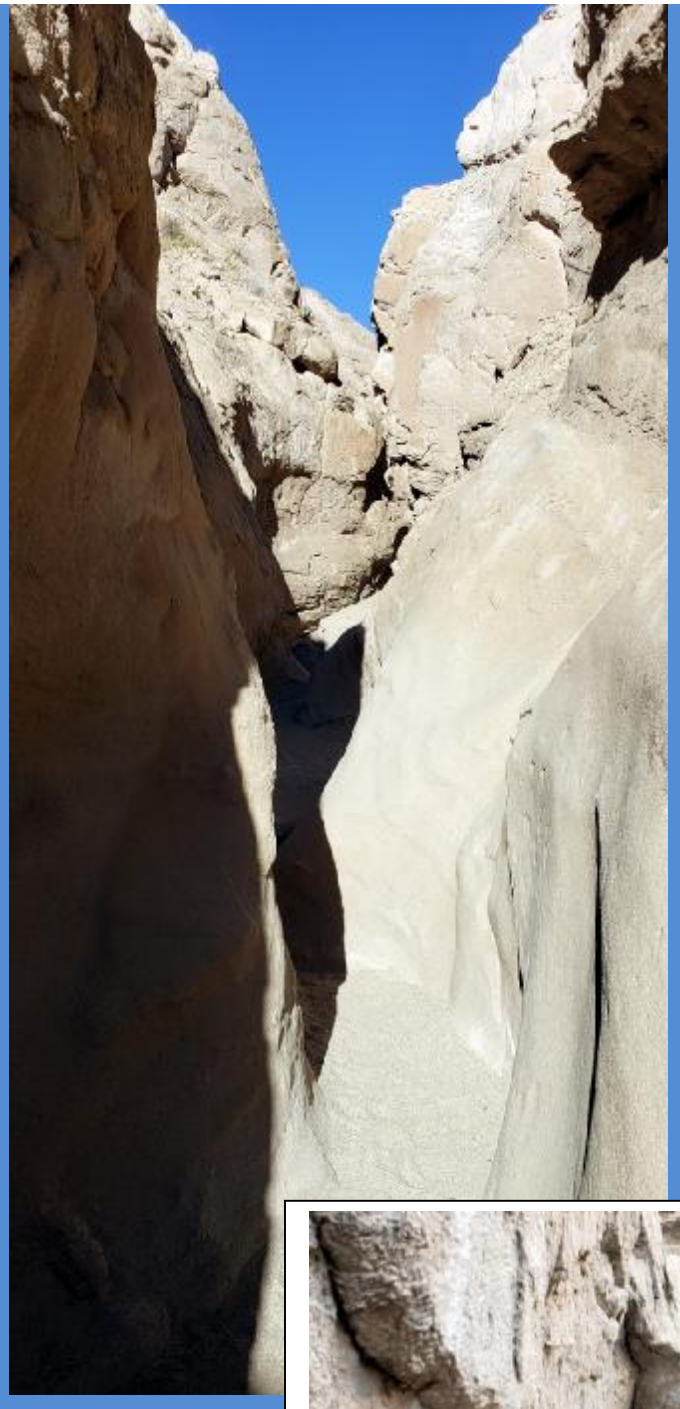


Unfortunately, the shadows keep you from seeing how the canyon ahead becomes a slot, only a few feet wide and curving like a snake.

Maybe these will help give you the idea



Oops, this was actually a side canyon. It was easy to pass by since the opening to the main canyon, left, faced upstream rather than downstream. Then it appears to end after only a few feet, but it makes a sharp right turn into the picture to the left. After crawling into the darkness there was an opening above. In the photo below left it looked more like climbing than hiking or scrambling, so I turned around and continued up the main canyon.



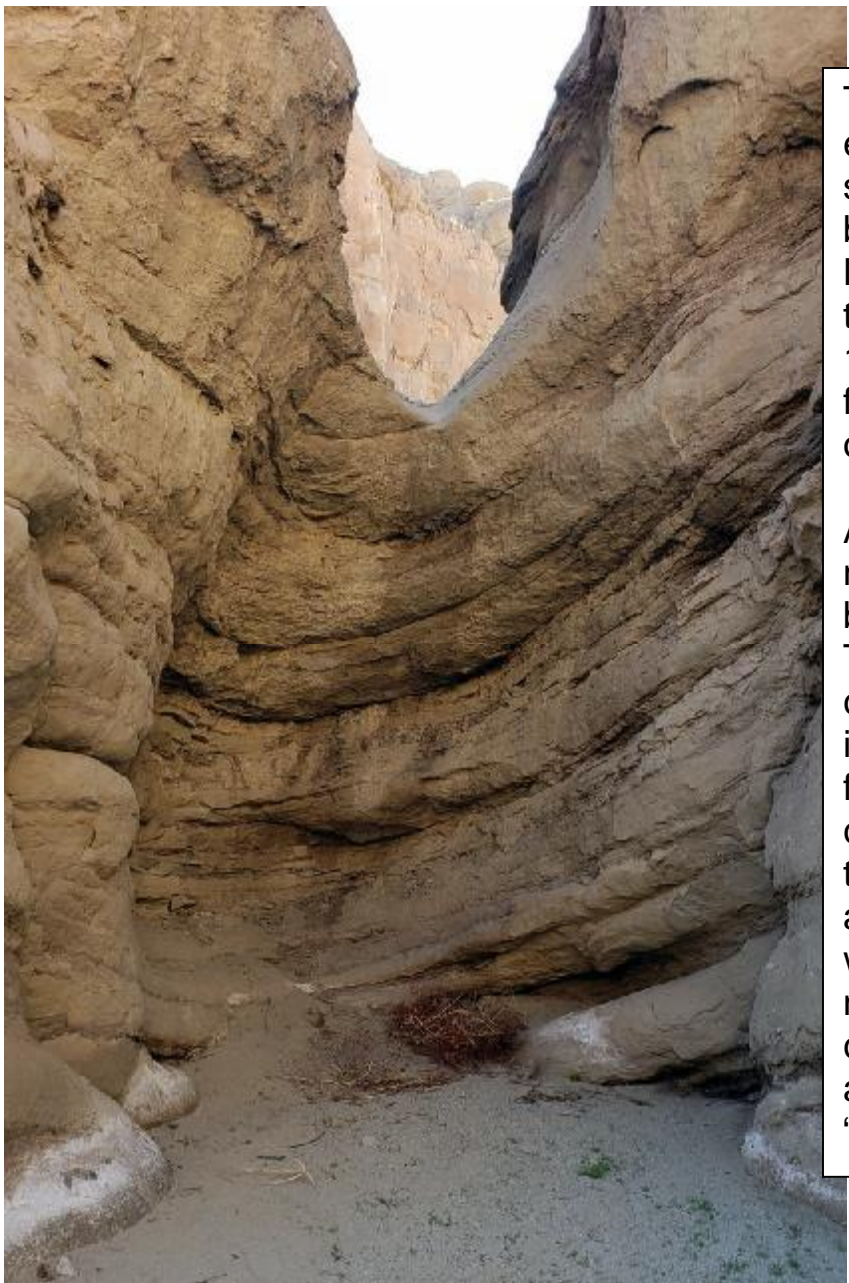
I mentioned 'more surprises yet to come?' This canyon would close to a slot only three or four feet wide, curving between the rock walls a hundred feet above, then it would widen out to forty or fifty feet for awhile before closing again into a slot. Very cool.



This one was only about four feet high so I had to squat down to get through.



This is what I mean about opening up after going through a slot.



The last rockfall was barely wide enough for me to squeeze through sideways with my waistpack on. Both belly and pack were scraping rock. Not long after, I came to the end of the line. That wall to the left is about 15 feet high and undercut a good six feet. Too bad, because it looks like it opens up yet again on the other side.

After I squeezed back through I noticed footprints that were not there before. A larger set and a child's set. They were so blatant there's no way I could have missed them on the way in. I purposely watch for the same footprints as I walk along. Soon I could hear voices and shortly after that a boy came into sight. His mom and sister were started back to see what the boy was looking at and noticed me, asking "Where did you come from?" I told her they didn't go all the way to the end. And she said "I guess not."



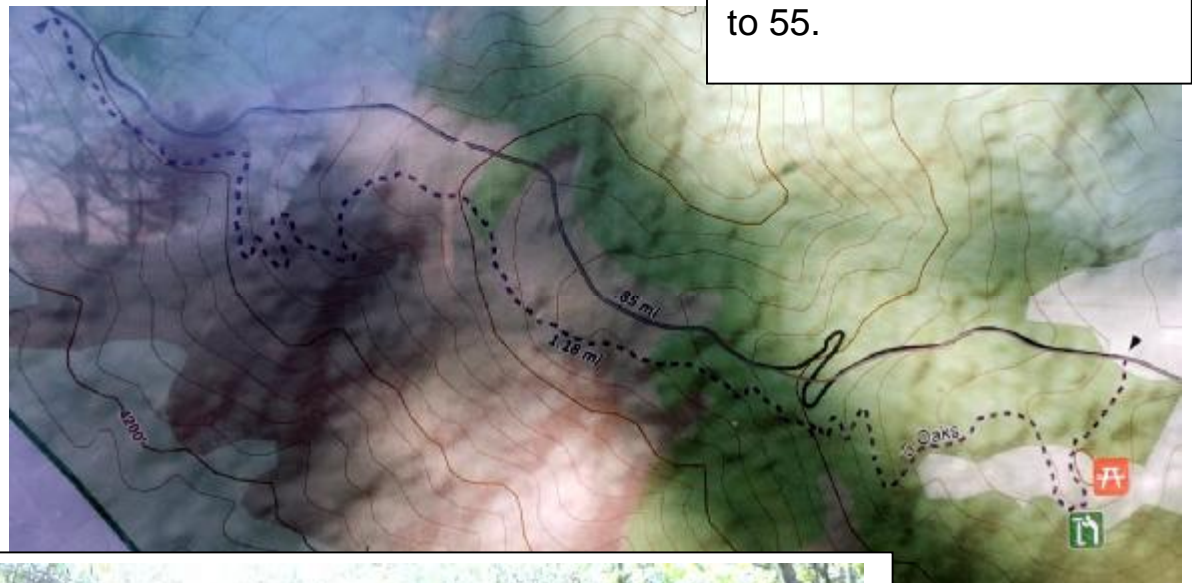
I did about a half dozen side canyons as well as the main one, in total probably 4.8 miles by the time I reached the RV. I sat inside for awhile trying to decide what I wanted to do next. Fonts point? Eight miles round trip on a dirt road. Slot Canyon? Thirty miles to the dirt road then 1.8 to the slot, which is only a half mile long. The Mud Pots? Way out in the middle on a dirt road. And so on. It was frustrating, as I mentioned yesterday, that the things to see are mostly miles down dirt roads. And did I mention the wind? The photo above is only looking south, it became even more obscure looking east. As I sat in the RV it was rocked and sandblasted. My decision was to drive to Borrego Springs, I needed food for breakfast, eat lunch, look around, and then decide on a course of action.



I walked around a small open air mall which had two really nice stores, one with clothing, souvenirs, hiking equipment, shoes, luggage, beer, just about everything. Across the walk was an antiques and artifacts store: a South American Tribal exorcism mask; a steamer trunk from 1850; half scale metal sculptures of horses, buffalo, dinosaurs and much more. Very interesting. By now I had decided that I had had enough of the desert and I set the GPS for a hike near Julian, California. The photo above is looking back at the road cut into the mountainside. Talk about twists and turns, this road was a doozy.



I had an address for this trailhead. The preserve is unmanned, open from sunrise to sunset, but the road is closed all the time, walk in only. I had checked AllTrails so I knew it was steep and took both hiking poles. The temp had also dropped from 74 to 55.



FIVE OAKS TRAIL

Welcome to Volcan Mountain's Five Oaks Trail. Funded through a California Recreational Trails Program grant, this 1.2 mile "hikers only" trail was built in 2003 with the assistance of the California Conservation Corps.

Built to provide you with a more intimate hike experience, the trail will take you under oak canopies, through chaparral and across open meadows revealing stunning vistas of the San Diego County back country.

Culminating in a panoramic overlook of the town of Julian, the trail offers a final sweeping view to the south including the Cuyamaca and Laguna mountains.

Please be safe, courteous and respectful of Volcan Mountain.
Enjoy your hike.

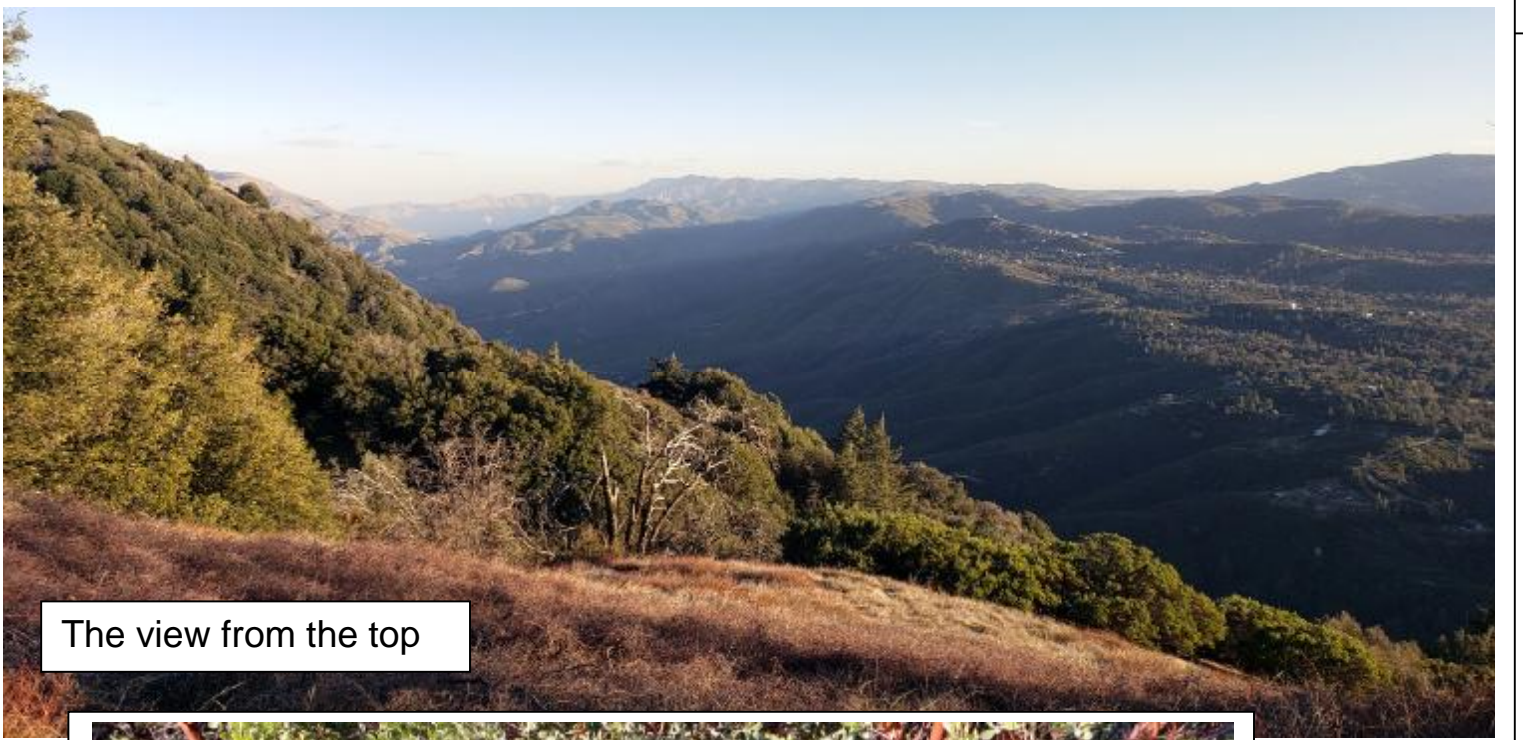


Did I mention I was sick of the desert? This was great. I felt like I was back in North Carolina and the Great Smokey Mountains. It was a pleasure to NOT see cactus for a change.



Did I mention it felt like I was back in North Carolina? This was just from an opening in the trees. It was still windy. I put on two sweatshirts and my stocking cap. I worked up a sweat on the way up, several switchbacks and an 860 foot elevation gain in 1.6 miles will do that. I had to stop for a moment three times. Of course, this was after already putting in 4.8 miles this morning.

Below is another shot of the valley. This was one of my rest stops, they even placed a bench there for me to sit on. You can see the dirt trail along the bottom.



The view from the top



I saw a lot of these trees along the trail. The setting sun does not do them justice color wise. They have a deep red bark and after looking it up, I find they are Manzanita trees. Very eye catching plant.



Probably hiked close to eight miles again today.

I little better than last night's sunset. This is the best I could do by pulling over on the road and jumping out to snap the photo. I was below the tree line and this was the only opening I came across. I was also in a hurry to find a campsite for the night.

There are a ton of campgrounds in the area, probably starting at twenty bucks a night. Freecampsites, allstays, harvest host and boondockers welcome all have nothing free near Julian, which I want to explore tomorrow. The closest I could find was nine miles down the road, back into the Anzo Borrega State Park.

I put in the GPS coordinates, but when I arrived, now almost full dark, I found 'no camping' signs posted. Darn. I had just passed a pullover a mile or so back. I turned around. The signs say no stopping or parking on the pavement. Well, I am off the pavement. Granted, it's not by much, maybe twenty-five feet.

So I will just hope not to be awakened in the wee hours by a knock on my door telling me I have to move.

I have been here for three hours and so far so good. I would knock on wood but there isn't an ounce of it in the RV.

Until next time.....