

Western Road Trip Newsletter



Ready to hit the road

Hello to my Family and Friends!

For those of you who are not aware of what is going on or why you may be getting this Newsletter, I will let you know.

This whole idea actually started several years ago. I love the West and the mountains. I really enjoyed our brief family visits to Utah, and Bryce and Zion National Parks, back in the 60's. I have since longed to return.

So, back in May or June of this year, while surfing the 'net for places to go, (and planning a western vacation in my mind), I came across the "Great American Adventures John Wayne Monument Valley Horseback Ride".

So shoot me, I'm a John Wayne fan. Have been my whole life. Anyways, the gist of the vacation is to spend 4 days on horseback, in Monument Valley, with a Navajo guide, riding the same trails and seeing the sights from John Wayne and John Ford movies. Enough of that for now, I will elaborate on my sore backside later during the actual riding portion of the trip.

Since I had committed to participate in "The Ride", I decided I might as well see some of the other sites in the area. I will keep you in suspense on my

intentions until I get there. Let's just say there are many National Parks that I have not been to on the agenda.

The Trip

I left home at 9:30 this morning, only 1 1/2 hours behind schedule. One of the Rubbermaid containers I purchased turned out to be too high for the storage area of the camper and I had to reorganize. But, as Erin said, "when have we ever left for vacation on time?"

As I pulled out of the subdivision the check engine light went on. Just had the oil changed Thursday and everything was OK. I think this is a recurring problem I am having with a sensor. I will call Village Auto on Monday and ask their advice.

I took I-94 West to 12/18 around the bottom of Madison then 151 into Iowa to I-380 south then I-80 west...Ha, ha, ha! I bet you thought I was going to describe every road! Don't worry, I won't bore you with every step. Let's just say that I arrived in Winterset, IA at about 4:10 p.m.

Why Winterset, IA you ask? I thought it would be appropriate to visit John Wayne's Birthplace and Museum, especially in light of the major theme of this vacation.

Day 1
Saturday
October 26th

Home
To
Nine Eagles State Park,
Iowa

Stats

475 miles

475 total miles this trip

Just over 7 hours on the road

MPG:

Weather

High Temp: 51

Low Temp: TBD

Conditions: Cloudy to sunny

*"So shoot me, I'm a
John Wayne fan!"*



The John Wayne
Statue in Winterset, IA



The last tour of the day starts at 4:30, so I just barely made it. I looked around the gift shop until the tour started, but did not see anything I was interested in buying.

I am such a big fan that I received a personal tour guide all to myself. It helped that I was the only one signed up for the tour.

This oversize vehicle was taking the on-ramp ahead of me. Whatever that is, it even makes the semi-tractor look small.

My tour guides name was Barb. She has been doing tours here for about 2 years. Is it a bad thing that she probably learned more about John Wayne from me than I did from her? Oh well.

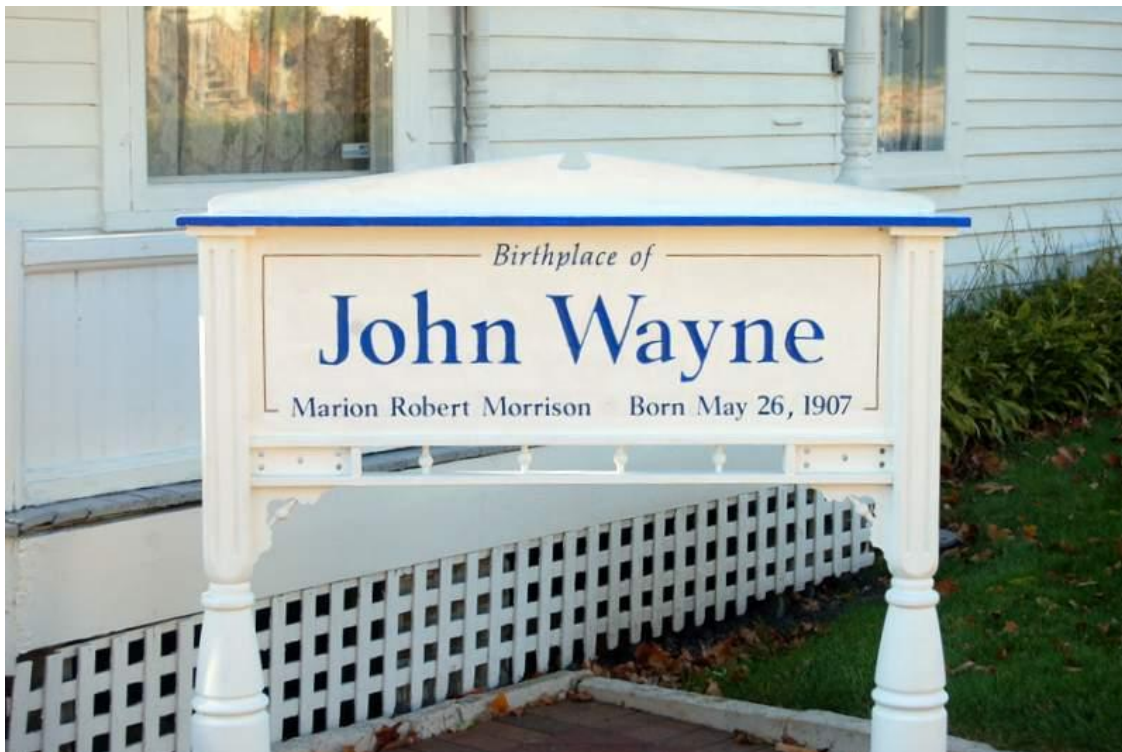
The Duke, who took that nickname from his dog, only lived here for 3 years before moving a little further west in Iowa. Then after his brother was born, I never knew the Duke had a brother, the family moved again to California.

His birth name was Marion Robert Morrison. When his brother Robert was born, his mother changed his middle name to Michael, telling John that he could not have the name Robert since his brother was named Robert.

The house was built in 1880 and is only about 20' x 20'. Family Parlor, visitor parlor, bedroom and kitchen. Much of the interior is original. No photos allowed.



Here it is. John Wayne's Birthplace.



I think this sign is self explanatory

There are a lot of photos and memorabilia on the walls. If I wanted to spend all day there reading photo captions, I probably could. I read some of the more interesting items, like his contract to appear on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-in*, newspaper birth announcement, etc, etc. I was only on tour for about 20 minutes. I took the photos above and got back on the road.

Next stop, Nine Eagles State Park, almost on the Iowa border with Missouri. I checked the sunset time when I left Winterset. I had 90 minutes and 72 miles to go.

No problem finding the park, but I had a little trouble finding the campground. No one at the ranger station, leave money in the box. First I went to the non-electric sites. A couple there from Wisconsin told me the restrooms were locked, even though when they called earlier they were told the bathrooms and hot showers would be available. So I went back to the electric sites. With darkness moving in I did not want to have any problems, and thought electricity might help.



Here is my campsite at Nine Eagles

My back is killing me and its 10:15 and 38 degrees, so I will finish this off. Once I got set up and started a fire I realized I could not use the stove on the Grub Hub because it would melt the plastic; I realized I forgot the frozen food I bought yesterday, butter for the pie irons, breakfast sausages, hash browns and tater tots; I plugged the electric heater in and the fan was hitting the guard in back. Ah well, life on the road.

I used the butter spray on the pie irons and the bread and made a taco for dinner over the campfire; I fix the heater fan with a corkscrew; then the Ranger knocked on my tent because I forgot to pay.

Solved all those issues and had a s'more for dessert.

Time for bed. I wonder where tomorrow will take me and what challenges it will offer.

Mark

Just as a reminder....I will try and send out a newsletter every night. If you don't want to receive it, let me know. If you know of someone who would like to receive it, let me know. I will also try to post the photos to Picasa on the web. Morgan, I might need your help for that. If you don't receive a newsletter I... 1) can't get a signal in the desert 2) am having too much fun to do one 3) am too tired to do one 4) fell off a cliff and will never do one again.

