

Western Road Trip Newsletter



The first National Park of the Trip

Day 5

Wednesday
October 30th

Pagosa Springs, CO

To
Cortez, CO

Stats

110 miles

1676 total miles this trip

Weather

High Temp: 45

Low Temp: 28

Conditions: Snowy

"Maybe the worst is past, and the best is yet to come!"

Hello to my Family and Friends!

It was a wet and cold night. I woke up several times, not really cold, not sure why. Breakfast of scrambled eggs and Canadian bacon in pie irons. The sun did come out and melt the ice off the tent and the floor mats so I could pack everything up. I think it was about 10:15 when I hit the road.

I had a fellow camper stop by and ask about my camper. I was informed when I bought it that everywhere I go people will ask questions about it. (Erin, did a packet of brochures come for me?) He and his wife are from Minnesota. He had just retired last year. They were in a 38' Bristol Bay fifth wheel that was their only home. Summers in Minnesota, this winter in Arizona. Maybe next winter they will try Texas. We talked about crossing Wolf Creek Pass in the snow yesterday. His trailer brakes heated up and he had to stop for a half hour and let them cool off.

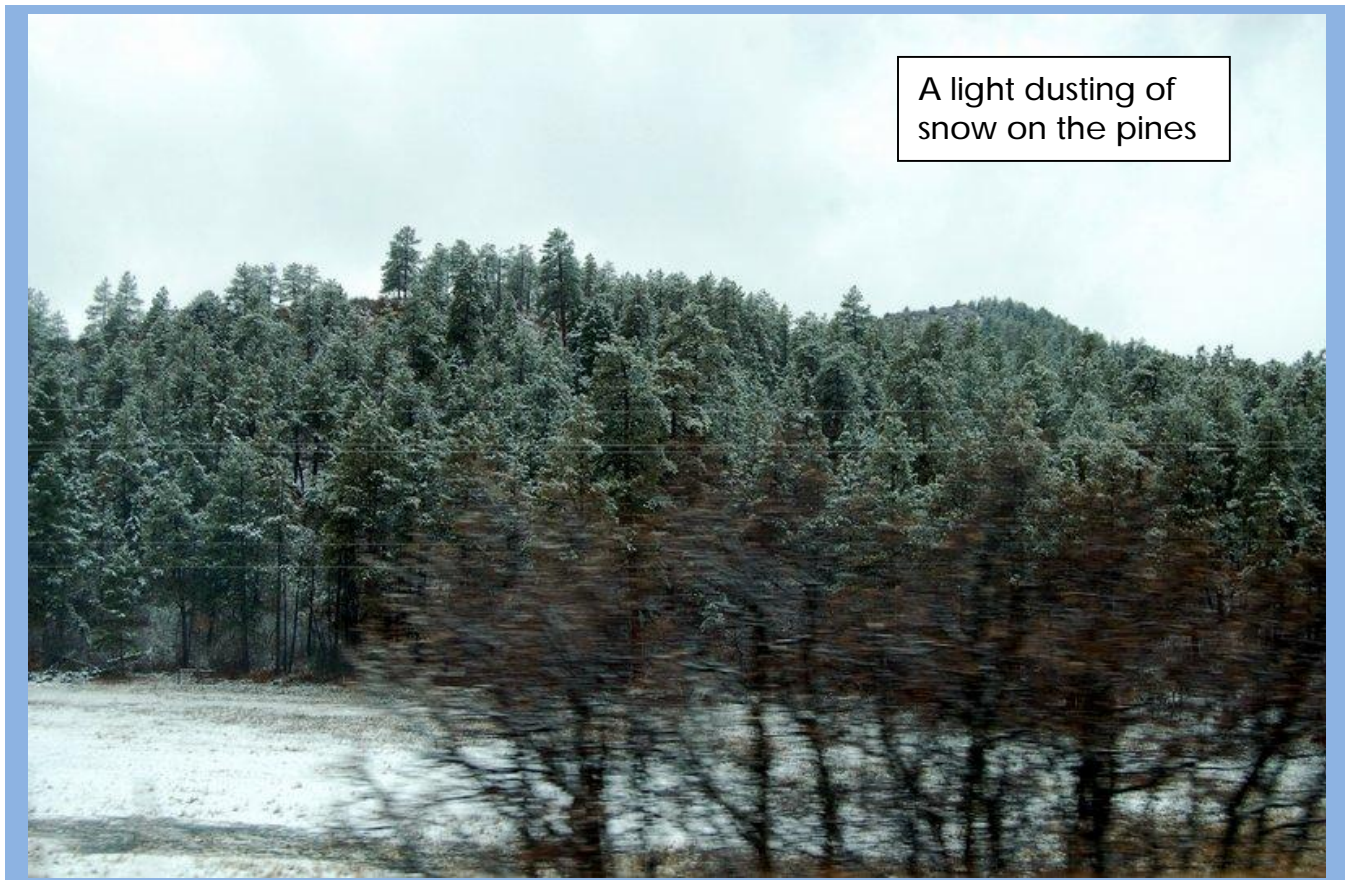
One of the sites I had planned on seeing was Treasure Falls, located between Wolf Creek Pass and Pagosa Springs. Supposedly, a short hike to a waterfall. Coming down that mountain in the snow, my focus was on the road. I never knew I passed it by. Another stop is Chimney Rock National Monument, a relatively new addition to the National Monument list. When I stopped for gas I did a little searching. Chimney Rock National Monument is, you guessed it, closed for the season. I did get the picture below as I drove past. I assume it is Chimney Rock. I am starting to feel that this may not have been the best time of the year to visit the Southwest.



The sun briefly appeared and lit up this tree amongst the gray skies.



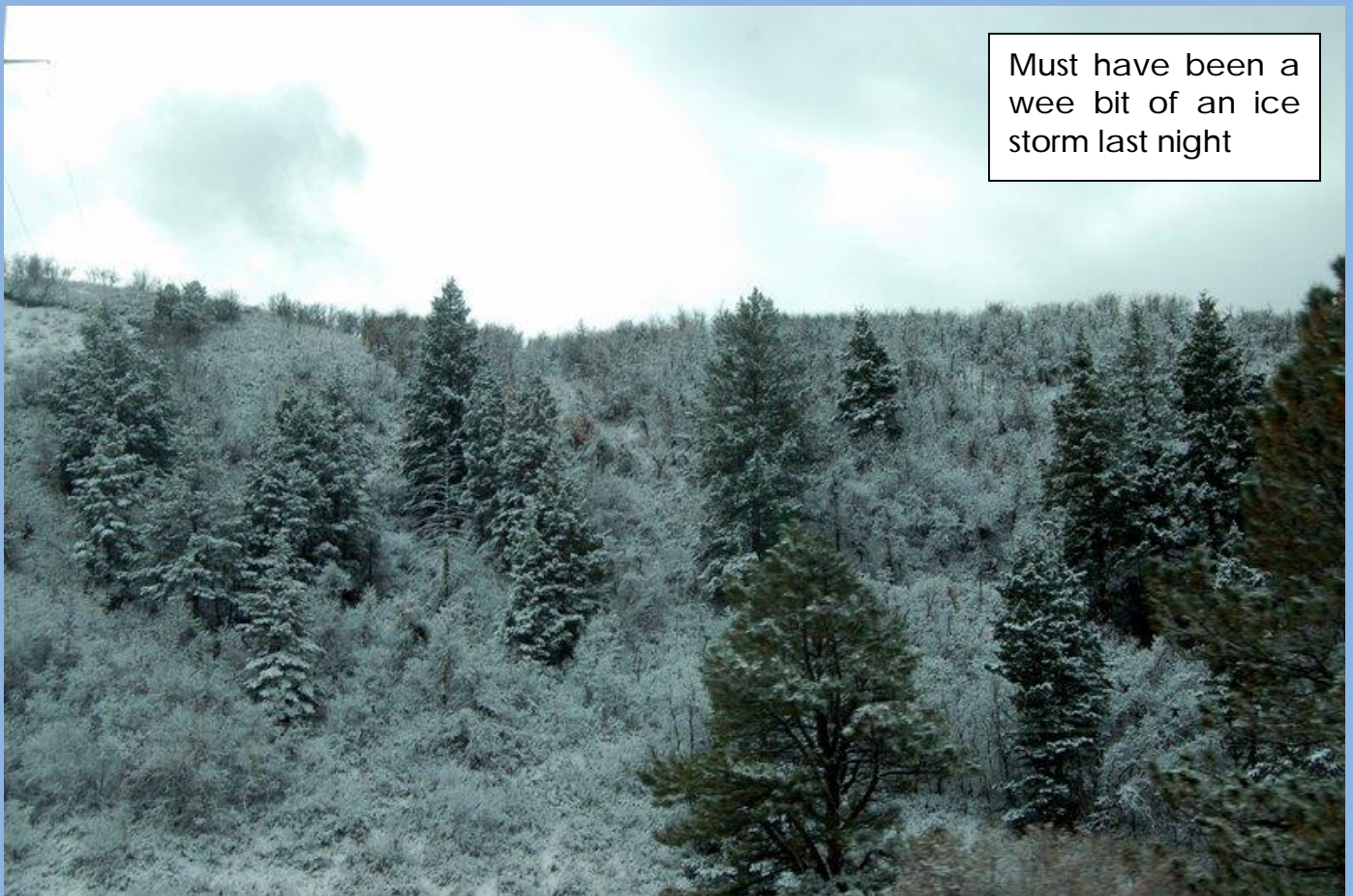
The next few photos I took as I was driving the truck, so they are not the greatest. They are not of anything specific, just views that I found pleasing to the eye. I hope you do too.



Everything was
a little frosty



Must have been a
wee bit of an ice
storm last night



By noon I had reached my destination. The temp was down to 33 and it was starting to snow. Things did not look good for camping. Morefield Campground is another 1000' higher in elevation than the visitor center pictured below. The Butte behind the Visitor Center is Point Lookout, 8457', making a dramatic backdrop to the building.



There is a 2.2 mile trail to the top from the campground that I am hoping to hike in the next couple days. Mesa Verde National Park Visitor and Research Center is a \$12.1 million facility that opened its doors on May 23rd, 2013. It replaces the Far View Visitors Center which first opened to the public in 1968 and was part of the NPS's Mission 66, an

effort to better accommodate increasing visitation of the nation's parks. The Mesa Verde Foundation, a philanthropic nonprofit, is now working closely with tribes affiliated with the park to develop a Tribal Cultures Center and Dance Plaza. The refurbished center will celebrate the tribe's contemporary cultures through visual and performing arts while providing a link to their ancestral past.



A 3D map of the park inside the Visitors Center

This was my reception as I left the Visitors Center. Only mild disappointment since the Ranger and I were looking at the forecast while I was inside. I guess I am definitely staying at a hotel tonight. The Ranger told me it could be better or worse up at the campground. I was also given a personalized photo guide. Personalized because she used



highlighters to point out the best places that were still open and when to be there for the best pictures. The forecast calls for sunny skies all day tomorrow and Friday, with temps 48 Thursday and 53 Friday. Good hiking weather.

So, after doing some shopping at WalMart in Cortez I drove across the street and set up camp at the site below. I had an early dinner at the Denny's Diner across the street.



From tomorrow on, every day should be hiking or horseback riding. If I accomplish the 10 hikes I have planned for tomorrow (yeah right!) I should have a lot of photos to share. Most of those hikes are under ½ mile. I will try to keep the chatter to a minimum. It also saves time because I actually have to think of what to type, then use my two-finger typing style to get it all down.

Maybe the worst is past, and the best is yet to come.

Mark