



First RV Trip - Fall 2018



Hello to Family & Friends

Sunrise is not until after 7 a.m. here. We were both awake by 7 but, it was still dark outside. We waited a little then took the photos below as the sun came up.



Day 11

Saturday

October 6th

Big Bend

National

Park

Weather

80's

Sunny

*More humid than you might
think here in the desert*

The picture above left is actually from the evening of the 5th as we drove from the airport to our campsite. I think this was in Fort Stockton after shopping at a super Walmart.

The lonely windmill.



The Camel Experiment

You will probably not see any camels in the park, but they would look perfectly at home in this landscape. In 1859 and 1860, camel caravans passed through Dog Canyon, directly to the east.

Convinced that camels could help patrol the new southwest frontier, the U.S. War Department shipped thirty-three camels and their native handlers from North Africa to Texas. Big Bend, with several days' ride between watering holes, offered ideal conditions for the test. Each camel in the 1859 expedition carried more than 400 pounds of equipment, traveled at least 72 hours without water, and survived on the ubiquitous creosotebush that no other stock would eat.

The Civil War and a burgeoning railroad brought an end to the camel experiment.

El experimento de los camellos

Probablemente no se verá ningún camello en el parque, pero si existieran ellas se sentirían perfectamente en su elemento en este panorama. En 1859 y 1860 las caravanas de camello pasaron por el Cañón del Fierro, directamente al este.

Convencidos que los camellos podrían ayudar a patrullar la frontera nueva del suroeste, el Departamento de Guerra de los Estados Unidos envió treinta y tres camellos y sus entrenadores indígenas del norte de África a Texas. El Big Bend por estar situado a una distancia de varios días entre agüaderos ofrecía las condiciones ideales para la prueba. Cada camello en la expedición de 1859 cargaba más que 400 libras de equipaje, caminaba 72 horas sin agua, y se alimentaba del arbusto de creosote que ningún otro ganado comía.

La Guerra Civil y el desarrollo del ferrocarril dieron fin al experimento de los camellos.



Illustrating the camel's preference for Big Bend, Lt. Edward L. Riebel noted that they crossed between the "most difficult points," crossing between B and D in only a day.

Respectando las hábitos de los camellos en Big Bend, el capitán Edward L. Riebel notó que cruzaron entre los "puntos más difíciles" entre B y D en solo un día.



Dog Canyon Trail

4.0 miles round trip
130 feet elevation change

The Dog Canyon trail is a cairn-marked path over the desert flats, leading to the small canyon splitting the Deadhorse Mountains.

This canyon was named from a story originating during Big Bend's early ranching period. Decades ago, a dog was found guarding an ox-drawn wagon in a canyon about 5 miles south of Persimmon Gap. The owners of the oxen were never found, and their identity remains one of the mysteries of Big Bend. The loyal dog, meanwhile, had a canyon named for it.

Dog Canyon is a gorge cut by Nine Point Draw through the Deadhorse Mountains, where massive layers of limestone rise vertically out of the canyon floor. Rock in this area is the oldest in the park, and includes a mix of Glen Rose, Santa Elena, Buda, and Boquillas limestone.

These layers have been faulted, uplifted, and overturned by the same mountain-building forces that built the Rocky Mountains. Before the creation of Dog Canyon, this part of the park was likely a closed basin with a playa lake.

Trail Safety:

- Bring plenty of water, a minimum of 2-3 liters per person
- Wear protective clothing, like sun hats and long sleeves. This trail has no shade until the very end of the canyon.
- Be aware of wildlife, such as snakes and mountain lions; maintain a safe distance

Trail Rules:

- No pets or bicycles on any trails
- No collecting or possessing plants, animals, minerals, or artifacts
- Do not feed or approach wildlife
- Pack out your trash
- Permits required for backpacking
- Drone/UAV use prohibited in park



The plan was to hike the Dog Canyon trail for about 1 mile. At that point we would find a sign directing us to the Devil's Den trail.

We found the sign, we went to the right, we hiked for about a ¼ mile and became frustrated, so we turned around and hiked to Dog Canyon. It was worth it.







A large grasshopper



Welcome

From ferocious sea creatures to massive dinosaurs and tiny early mammals, Big Bend rocks preserve one of the most diverse fossil records in North America.

Spanning more than 130 million years, the fossils on exhibit provide important clues to the changing environments at Big Bend and the ancient creatures that thrived here. This makes the park one of the best places in North America to study the long evolution of species and habitats.

FOSSIL DISCOVERY EXHIBIT



Big Bend National Park



Almost 100 million years ago, a shark and another sea creature roamed Big Bend.



About 70 million years ago, the water levels were higher and the crocodile roamed Big Bend on the shore.



70 million years ago, the dinosaurs were higher and the crocodile roamed Big Bend on the shore.



In 10 million years ago, the mammoth and bison roamed Big Bend on the shore.

On Exhibit: the last 130 million years of life



We could not believe the size of this fish

Xiphactinus (zih-FACK-tih-nuss)

Name means "sword ray"

Fierce Predator's Skull

With its sharp teeth and hulking size, this fish was a voracious predator. One fossilized skeleton from Kansas had a six-foot (two-meter) fish fossilized inside of it! That *Xiphactinus* may have choked to death on its struggling prey.



The long, spiky teeth caught and held onto smaller fish. Then this huge predator swallowed its prey whole.

QUICK FACTS:

Grew to be 18 feet (6 m) long
Fossil teeth and skull parts found at Big Bend in rocks from the Doguilla Formation
Lived around 90 million years ago
Fed on other fishes, small sharks, and sometimes mollusks

HOW BIG WAS A

Xiphactinus?



Quetzalcoatlus (KET-zal-koh-AT-lus)

Named for the Aztec feathered serpent god

Largest Flying Creature

This species is probably the largest flying creature to have ever lived. Their fossils are often found in rocks made from lake sediments. They may have waded in search of burrowing crustaceans or mollusks, much like modern shorebirds.

Similar fossil discoveries in the northern US and Romania indicate that *Quetzalcoatlus* was perhaps a global flyer, like modern albatrosses.

QUICK FACTS:

Up to 36 feet (11m) wingspan
Weighed just over 500 pounds (230 kg)
Used both legs and wings to walk on land
Fossils found at Big Bend include huge wing bones and skull parts

► The lightweight bones of *Quetzalcoatlus* are slender and hollow. Fossils found in the park took many years of careful work to extract.



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of a T-Rex thigh bone



The fossil exhibit was very interesting and we were both glad we stopped.

The building itself was very interesting in how it was constructed and the materials used.

When we were done, we ate lunch right there in the parking lot.





Our next stop was the Panther Junction Visitor Center. Our itinerary had us at Cottonwood Campground for tonight, then two different primitive sites on Saturday and Sunday. However, the ranger informed us that our choices were not on roads that an RV could navigate. So we decided to change to primitive sites all three nights since on permit fee, \$12.00, covered all 3 nights. \$4.00/night in a National Park? Not Bad!

Now, on the primitive sites you are all by yourself. We are staying at Hannold Draw Saturday and Sunday, then over to Grapevine 2 Monday night. You will see some photos later on of the campsite.

Because of our camping change we also decided to alter our itinerary and headed over to the Rio Grande Village today instead of Sunday.



Above – Tunnel ahead

Left – Through the tunnel and onto the Rio Grande Overlook road

Below – Our first look at the Rio Grande....and Mexico





Aerial Tramway from Mexico to Texas

From 1915-1919, an aerial tramway spanned the desert landscape. Carrying zinc, silver, and lead ore, the tramway started at the old Puerto Blanco Mine above Boquillas, Mexico, and terminated in the Ermita Valley, a six-mile-long journey. Four 6-mile-long cables were strung between massive wooden towers and could carry 60 buckets at a time, delivering 7 tons of ore per hour to the discharge terminal in the Ermita Valley.

From the Ermita Valley terminal, it was an 8 1/2-mile wagon or truck trip to the railroad in Marathon, Texas. Cables are still visible on the ground across the park. A short trail below this exhibit leads to the foundations of the first tower on the north side of the Rio Grande.



View of towers and cables from the Ermita Valley.



One terminal in the Ermita Valley. The tramway terminal on the north side of Ermita.

El Tranvía Aéreo Desde México a Texas

Entre 1915 y 1919 un tranvía aéreo cruzaba el desierto del desierto. Transportando zinc, plata y plomo, el tranvía aéreo conectaba Puerto Blanco y Ermita Valley. Cuatro cables de seis millas, una distancia de seis millas, transportaban 60 cubetas de carga por hora a la vez, entregando 7 toneladas por hora a la estación terminal en el valle Ermita.

Desde el valle Ermita un viaje de 8 1/2 millas en carreta o en camión a la estación en Marathon, Texas. Los cables todavía son visibles en el suelo atravesando el parque. Una corta senda debajo de esta exhibición conduce a los cimientos de la primera torre en el lado norte del Rio Grande.



View of towers and cables from the Ermita Valley.

Boquillas Canyon Trail

1.4 miles round trip
102 feet elevation gain

The Boquillas Canyon Trail climbs a series of steps to overlook the Rio Grande, then descends to the river floodplain. There, it dissolves into a collection of smaller footpaths until the beach ends and the river meets the canyon walls.

This beautiful canyon has drawn people to it for thousands of years. In bedrock along the river, look for mortar holes where nomadic tribes ground seeds, roots, and mesquite beans. This method of food preparation created deep circular pits over generations of use.

While both sides of the river were still part of Mexico, floodplain farming communities grew up along the river. As zinc, silver, and other minerals were discovered in the Sierra del Carmen, the river was a meeting place for exchange. An aerial tramway was constructed just upstream from here to carry the ore to the railroad in Marathon.

The name Boquillas, pronounced "bow-KFY-yes," is Spanish, meaning "little mouths." The name may be a reference to the small caves scattered along the cliff walls or from the numerous springs in the area.

Photo courtesy of Tom McKeown

Trail Safety:

- Bring plenty of water; a minimum of 1-2 liters per person
- Wear protective clothing, like sun hats and long sleeves

Trail Rules:

- No pets or bicycles on any trails
- Camping not allowed along this trail
- No campfires
- Smoking permitted in areas with sparse vegetation
- No collecting or possessing plants, animals, minerals, or artifacts
- Do not feed or approach wildlife
- Crossing the Rio Grande and entering Mexico may only be done at a Port of Entry













Below is the same photo Morgan took earlier through the windshield. This time no windshield and much better lighting.





As we drove into our campsite, Morgan noticed this Tarantula making his way across the gravel. Just had to get a picture of course, and show the size compared to my foot.





Panoramic view from the RV

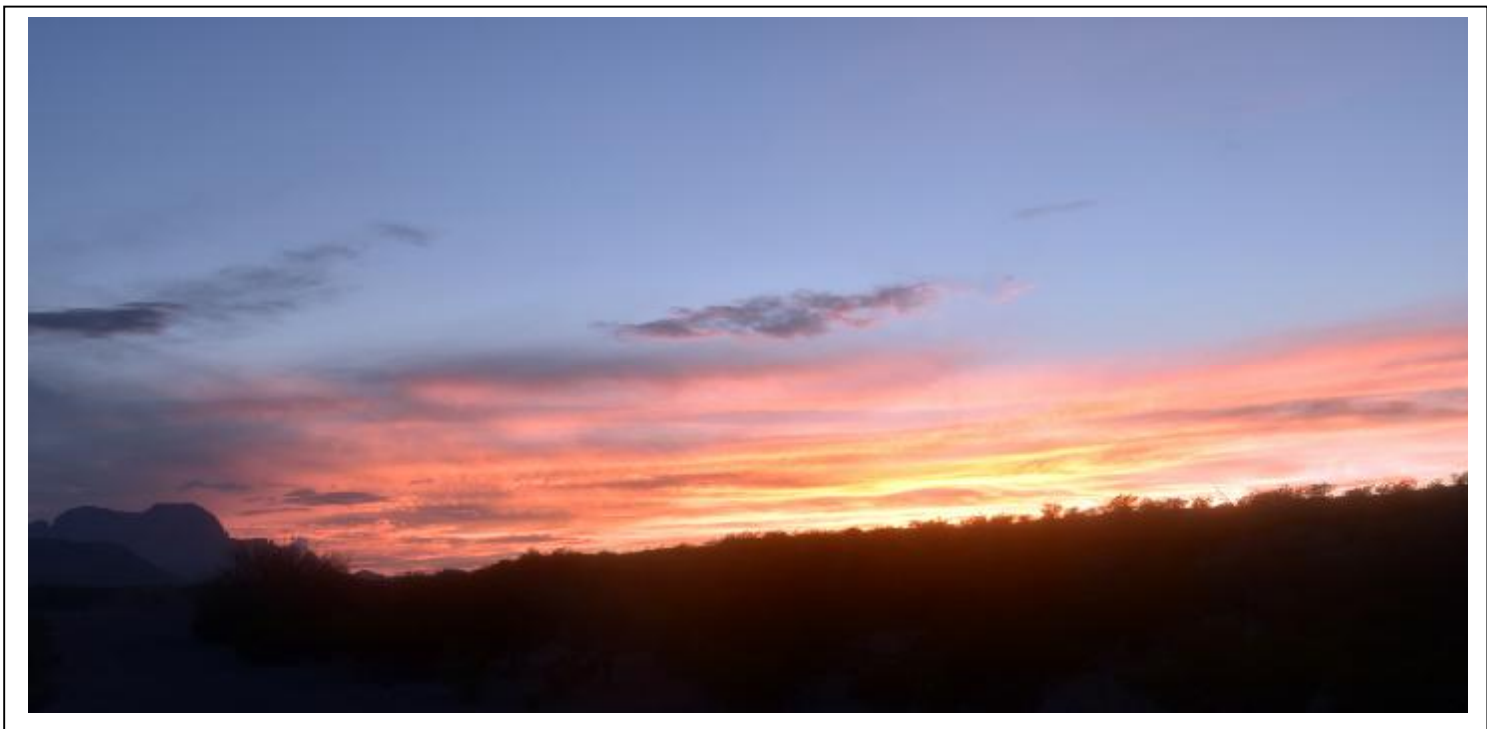
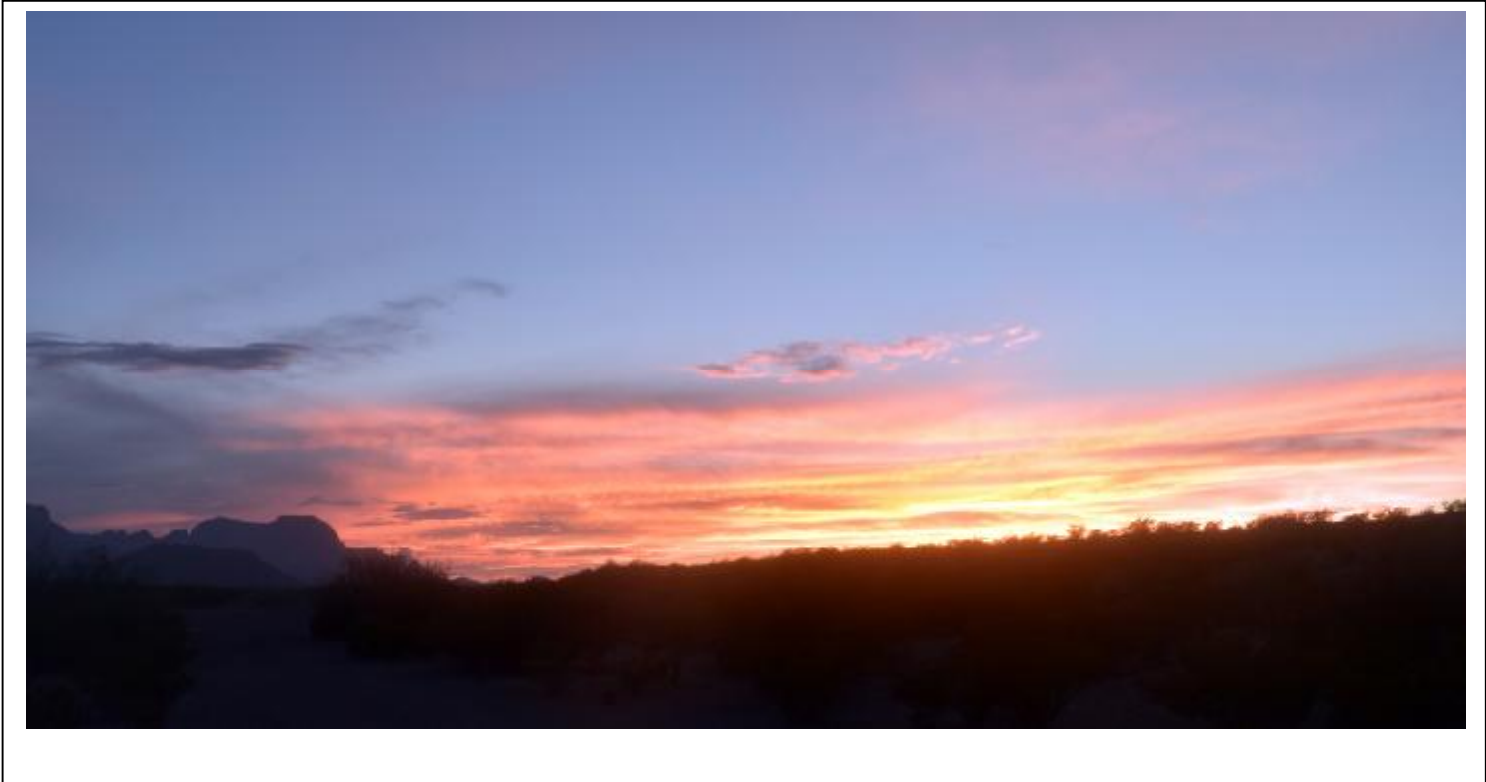




Ok, the sun started to set, it was pretty, so I took a few pictures. You can choose your favorite from those below.









It also turns out we both have service at our campsite, most of the time on the road, and today even up in the mountains on a trail. So I can send out the newsletters. They are a day behind but who cares.

I have a special issue planned for tomorrow.

The wind overnight was pretty intense. The Ranger predicted strong winds, hail and a lot of rain. I do not need hail. So I received my wish, no hail, wind only. But I forgot to put some of the stuff away outside and Morgan heard things blowing around about 1:15 a.m. I checked and found that the plastic bag for the carpet, the bag for a camp chair, a napkin and a washcloth had blown away. Just to clarify, we were both so tired we turned out the lights at 9:45 p.m. No wind at that time.

In the morning Morgan found the missing items amongst some bushes not too far from the RV.

I also have to mention, I am rambling a bit now, it is 10:30 and I am tired, that primitive camping means no electric, no water, no bathrooms, no anything. However, we are self-contained, and with the intense sun down here, I have never seen the batteries so well charged. Bathroom on board, hot showers, cold water, food, lights, it is really pretty cool. Only exception is this laptop. Running out of power very soon. Hope I can send it.

Goodnight