



First RV Trip - Fall 2018



Pie Iron French toast and pork sausage for breakfast

Hello to Family & Friends

Morgan had a good suggestion for the day: Instead of trying to hike Balanced Rock tomorrow morning before heading to the airport, a 4 hour drive, we are doing that hike this morning and then heading over to Terlingua Ghost Town. We will see what we have time for after that.

Before starting we enjoyed another great breakfast.



Day 13

Monday

October 8th

Big Bend

National

Park

Weather

70's - 80's

Sunny

Dry

Since many of the roads here are 4 wheel drive only, several of our planned hikes have been eliminated, or at least put on hold until a later date when we have access to a 4 wheel drive vehicle.



This is a vulture sanctuary operated by the park. You can see the fence that keeps them in. I also have some land for sale in Florida. LOL What we found out is that this is a landfill site, which makes sense that the visitor and employee generated garbage is not hauled 150 miles every day, but just 10 miles or so down the road to this landfill. But there were a lot, A LOT, of vultures hanging around. Hundreds.

Our first hike to Balanced Rock is 6 miles down a gravel road. Our campsite for tonight is 4 miles down this same road. So, 6 miles of gravel down, 6 miles of gravel back, more sights to see, then 4 miles of gravel to our campsite and 4 miles of gravel tomorrow morning on our way out. It takes 20 minutes to travel those 4 miles. The RV is getting a real breaking-in. Closing in on 5000 miles already.



Grapevine Hills Trail

2.2 miles round trip
80 feet elevation gain

The Grapevine Hills Trail leads through a desert wash before climbing through boulders to a balanced rock. Most of the trail is easy, but the last quarter mile is a steeper climb over rocks.

The surrounding Grapevine Hills is a laccolith formed by magma that welled up near the Earth's surface into a dome shape roughly 38-27 million years ago. The magma cooled underground, and has become exposed by erosion over time.

While hiking, look for large calcite crystals within these rocks; the calcite was deposited from

minerals dissolved in water that moved along fractures in the rock. Calcite crystals like these are among the clues that help geologists find and understand faults.

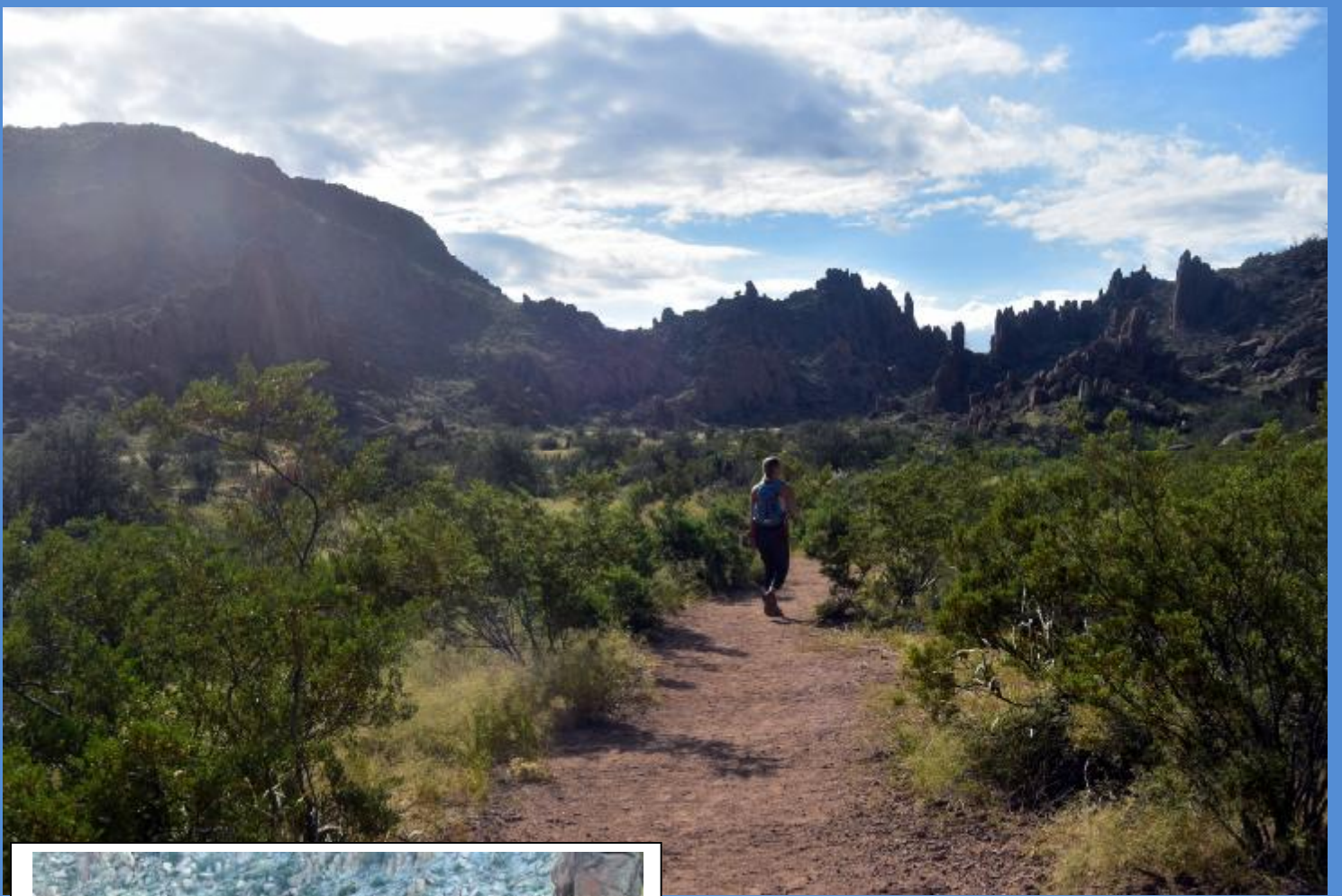
Within these hills are examples of typical Chihuahuan Desert plants. In the creek bed near the trail, additional water resources allow plants like Texas Persimmon to grow. Look for these stately shrubs, characterized by smooth gray bark and small evergreen leaves. Fruit from the persimmon provides an important food source for wildlife, such as fox and javelina.

Photo courtesy of Mike Wood

Trail Safety:



Morgan walking into the valley of death, on a well worn path



As the trail began to climb it was more like bouldering than hiking, which is really cool and fun. We both prefer bouldering to just plain hiking.

On our way down we realized that the path, to the left, that we took was not the correct trail. Oh well, our way was a lot more fun.



You go girl



After saving us from the falling boulder, Super Morgan takes time to admire the view





The layering in the rocks under the balancing rock and under our feet were wild. It is incredible to think of the force and pressure needed to bend rock.

Left - the rock actually makes more than a 90 degree turn.





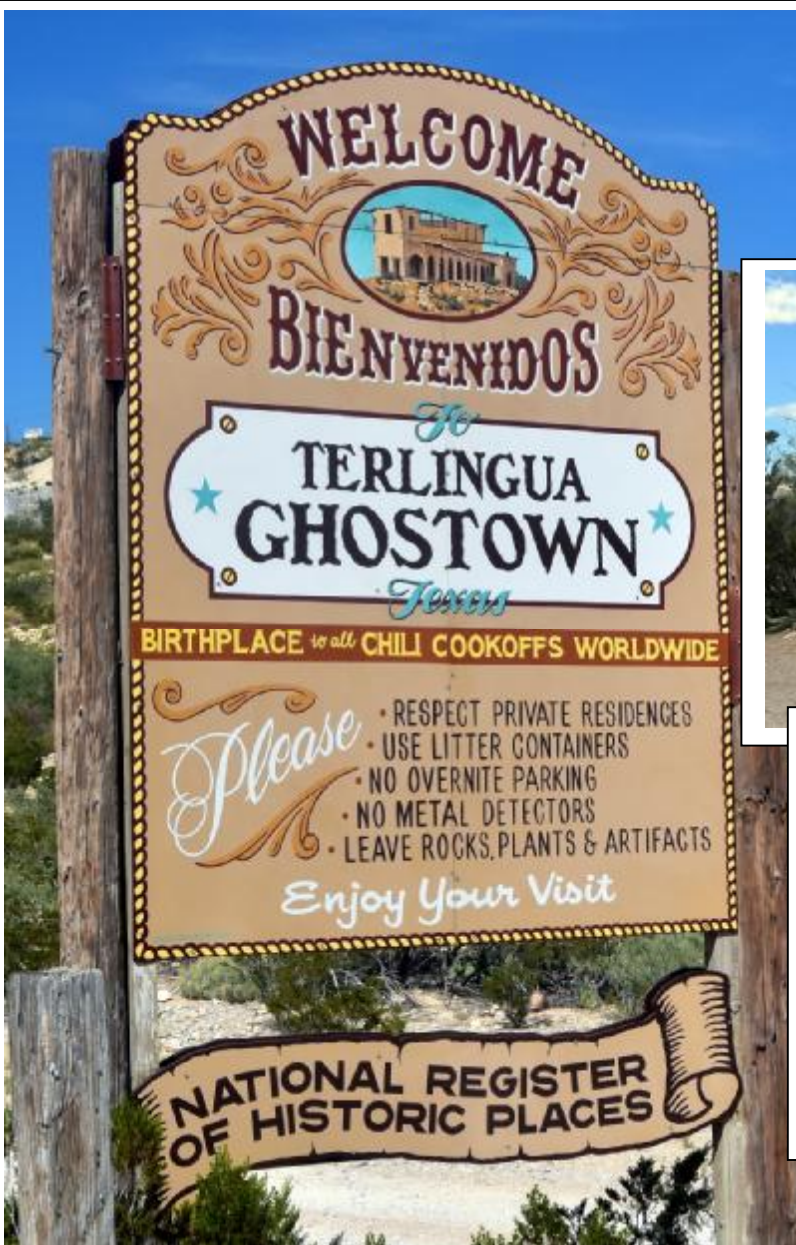
Who says there is no wildlife in the desert? We saw lizards, the one to the left was the largest, about 8" long; red, black, yellow and green caterpillars; black, rainbow hued, red and gray beetles; a tarantula; a deer; hawks, eagles, birds, and even a road runner (meep, meep); tomorrow as we leave the park we will see a coyote. That's right folks, I can see into the future.

As we neared the RV below, the cloud shadows on the hills looked great.





Terlingua Ghost Town was not what we expected. You know, abandoned saloon, wood boardwalks, old dusty streets. Turns out some of the stone buildings are ruins, but some have been turned into stores and touristy shops; people still live there. Kinda disappointing.





FEDERICO VILLALBA

VILLALBA FAMILY TRADITION TRACES THEIR LINEAGE TO ALGIERS WHERE SEVERAL GENERATIONS WERE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF SANTIAGO. IN 1764, FEDERICO'S GREAT-GRANDFATHER, JUAN VILLALBA, TRAVELED TO NEW SPAIN (MEXICO). HE FOUNDED RANCHO VILLALBA IN 1773 NEAR PRESENT-DAY ALDAMA, CHIHUAHUA, WHERE FEDERICO VILLALBA WAS BORN IN 1858. FEDERICO LEFT HIS FAMILY'S RANCH AND MOVED TO SAN CARLOS NEAR THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER. HE SET UP A STORE, SELLING ROPE, LEATHER GOODS AND SUNDRIES; IT SOON BECAME IMPORTANT IN SAN CARLOS, AND EVENTUALLY SUPPLIED THE MILITARY IN THE AREA.

IN THE EARLY 1880s, VILLALBA EXPANDED HIS BUSINESS INTERESTS INTO TEXAS. HE SETTLED IN AN AREA HE CALLED CERRO VILLALBA AND OPENED A STORE. IN 1889, FEDERICO MARRIED MARIA CORTEZ AND BEGAN PURCHASING LAND. IN 1902, VILLALBA LOCATED AN OUTCROP OF CINNABAR, A MINERAL THAT PRODUCES MERCURY, AND BECAME THE FIRST HISPANIC IN THE COUNTY TO FILE A MINING CLAIM. VILLALBA, TIBURCIO DE LA ROSA, D. ALARCON, AND WILLIAM STUDY ENTERED INTO A PARTNERSHIP THAT COVERED SIX PARCELS OF TWENTY-ONE ACRES EACH, INCLUDING WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE STUDY BUTTE MINE. THE ASSOCIATED MINING COMMUNITY TOOK ON THE MINE'S NAME (STUDY BUTTE), AS DID VILLALBA'S STORE (STUDY BUTTE STORE). WITH A GROWING FAMILY, FEDERICO BUILT A LARGER HOUSE ON HIS PROPERTY ALONG TERLINGUA CREEK AND NAMED IT RANCHO BARRAS. VILLALBA AMASSED LARGE TRACTS OF LAND, INCLUDING 15 SECTIONS IN BLOCK G-4, WITH HOLDINGS EXTENDING FROM BURRO MESA TO TERLINGUA CREEK. DURING HIS LIFE, FEDERICO GAINED A REPUTATION AS A BUSINESSMAN AND RANCHER, AND AS AN ADVOCATE FOR MEXICAN AMERICANS OF THE BIG BEND. VILLALBA DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES IN 1933 ON HIS RANCH AND IS BURIED IN TERLINGUA CEMETERY. FEDERICO AND HIS LEGACY EMBODY THE SPIRIT OF A TEXAS PIONEER.

1901-41



The cemetery however was fairly interesting. The overall picture below kind of looks like a scene from a Clint Eastwood Spaghetti Western

1885-1900 BIG BEND SNAPSHOT HISTORY

1900-1920

TO A MODERN OBSERVER, living conditions in early 20th-century Terlingua, truly seem primitive, even brutal. For immigrant miners, Terlingua and the Chisos Mine offered a distinct improvement over itinerant, seasonal work. Work was more by biological necessity and not war for the next 20 years of the century, though difficult at times. Life in Terlingua was not all hot and drudgery.

By 1914, Terlingua citizens had access to a well-stocked commissary, ice-making plant, public bath and lodging facilities, erratic telephone service, dependable water supply, and US Mail service three times a week. The Chisos Store attracted trade from a radius of one hundred miles on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border. The biggest store between Del Rio and El Paso, the Store enjoyed a longer life span than the mine and consistently yielded profits long after quicksilver recovery became a losing proposition.

1920-1935

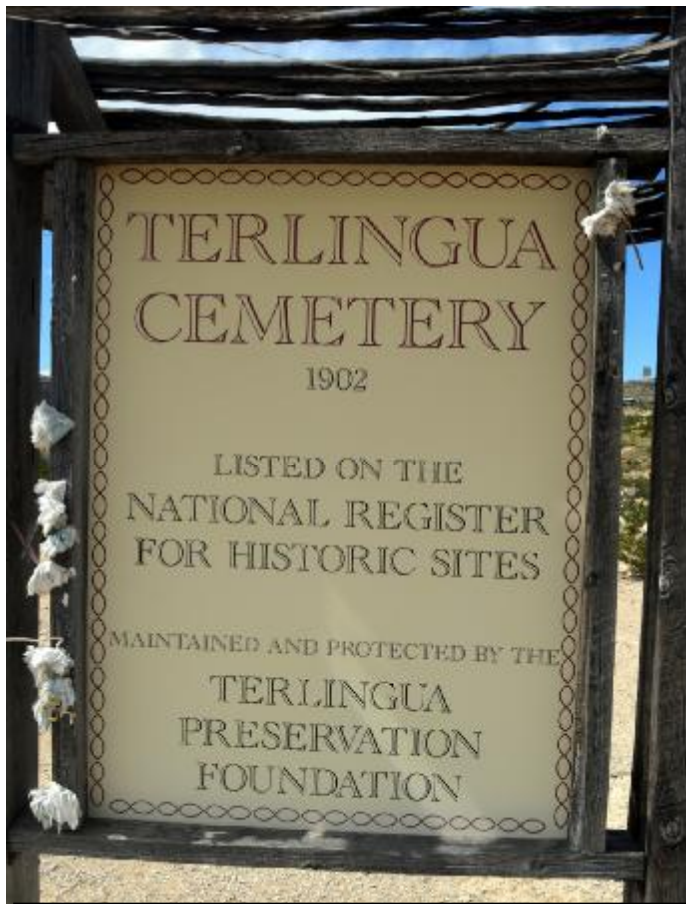
BY 1914, Terlingua amenities included the Oasis ice cream shop and the Chisos Theater for motion pictures. Dances were held most weeknights on the concrete slab located 50 yards north of this exhibit. Marie Grace Peters, local school teacher, said it all: "We had a good life, we made our fun."

1935-1945

THE PROSPECT OF STEADY WORK in the Terlingua mine attracted laborers from the San Carlos copper and silver mines from Chihuahua, northern Mexico. The Pros and Cons of Terlingua were a getting on people getting on, as well as for fuel. Spain established San Carlos as a military colony in the late 18th century to protect the borders of its new world empire. After the area Texas frontier opened with the defeat of one faction through San Carlos, their descendants have populated a significant portion of the southwestern US, what may be discerned in the San Carlos map.

WORK IN THE MINES was hard and dangerous. Primary risks were falls, falling rocks, gas exposure, and fire. The prospecting era led to the rise of mechanical and hand-related injuries as well as exposure to toxic agents. Despite these obvious dangers, the global influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 notwithstanding, over the growth of the Terlingua Cemetery from only other single cases.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Terlingua Cemetery is still in use. Families and friends of the deceased frequently come to pay respects. The cemetery is located on private property. Please do not disturb graves or remove artifacts of any kind.



The ruins



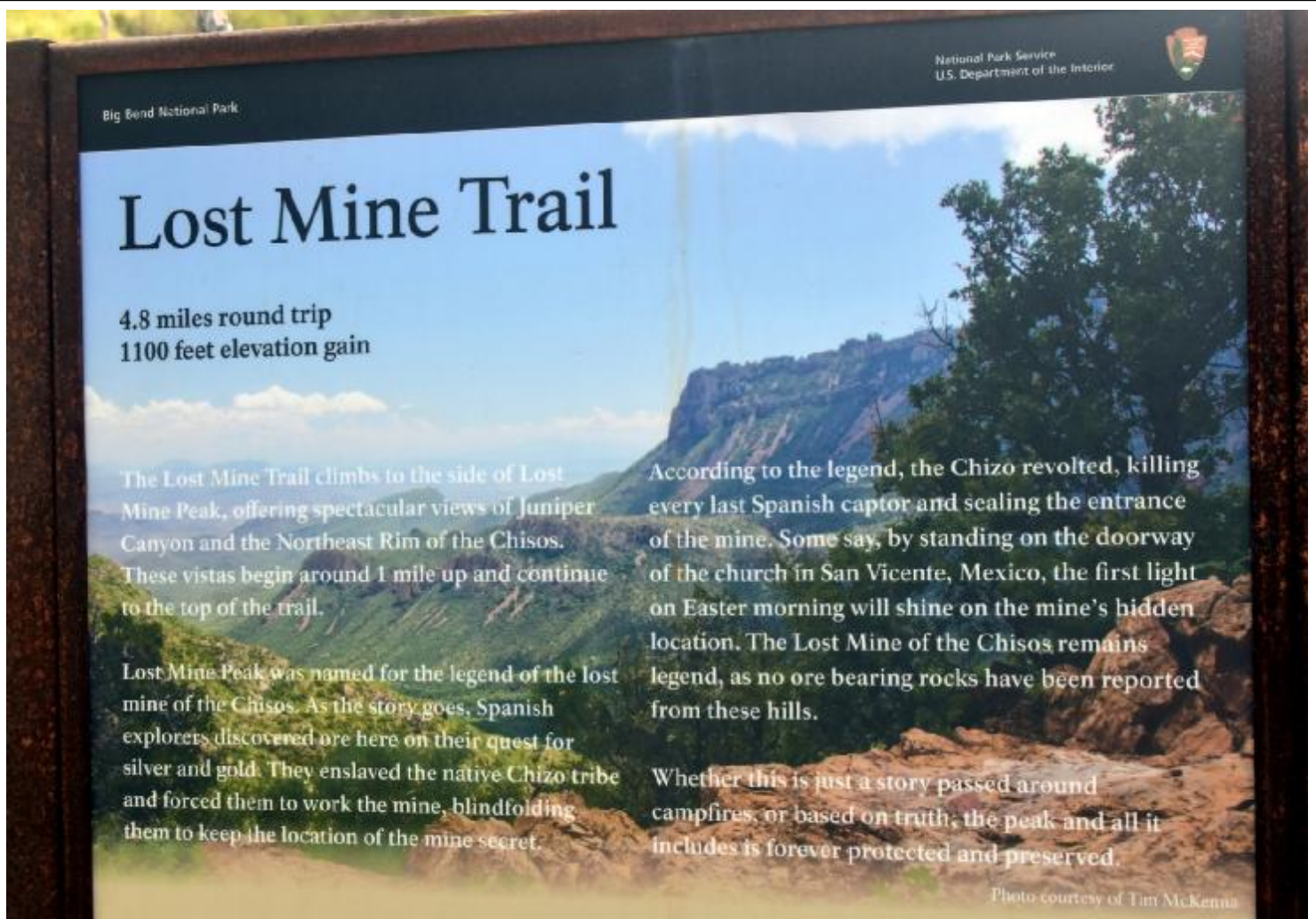
Check out the street sign.

A REAL Texas Longhorn





With time to kill we decided to risk the 24' maximum RV length road in Chisos Basin. After looking at the map, I thought we could get about 5 miles to the Lost Mine Trail before the road became undriveable. This was our first sign. Maybe add a couple more animals to the list?





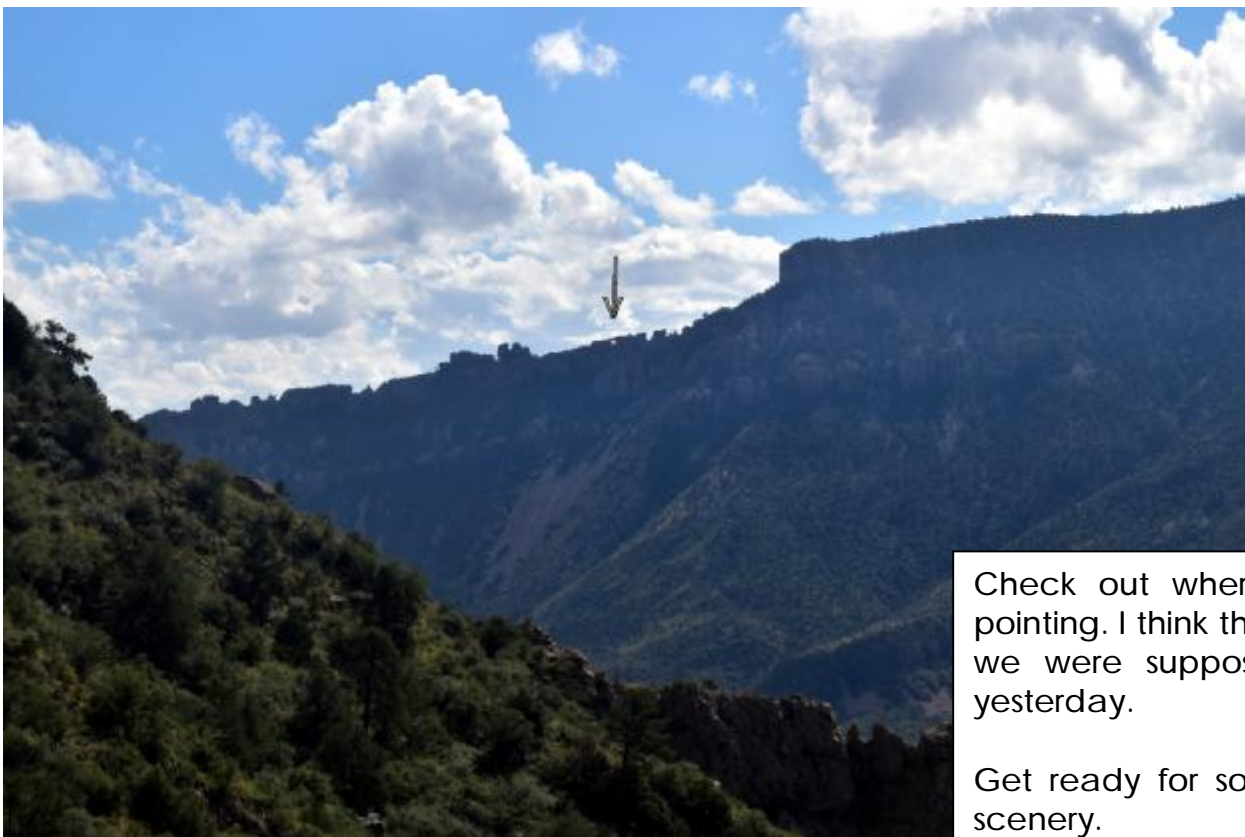
On the hike up, which Morgan convinced me to try (and glad I did), most of the views were back over my left shoulder. After this shot I decided to get to the top first. It is a lot easier to stop on the way down with the view in front of me than stopping and turning around every so often.



Morgan just disappeared around the bend ahead.



Each of us goes at our own pace. Morgan gets to a spot well ahead of me and stops to rest and wait. I catch up, she is rested, and off she goes. Wait a minute, let me rest for a spell also. We start off together again, and she disappears. Now, in the photo above let's play Where's Morgan?



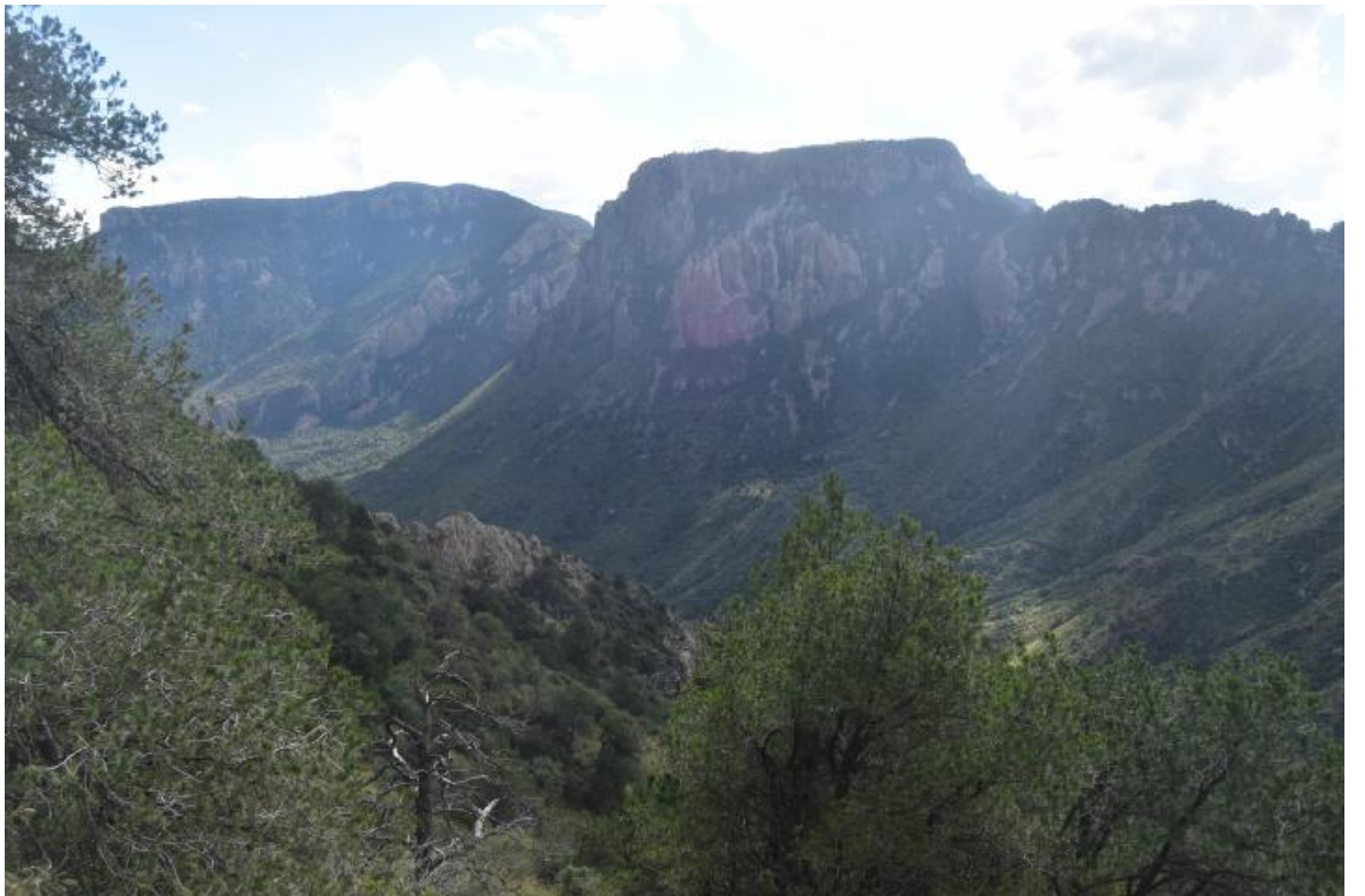
Check out where the arrow is pointing. I think this is the Window we were supposed to hike to yesterday.

Get ready for some outrageous scenery.

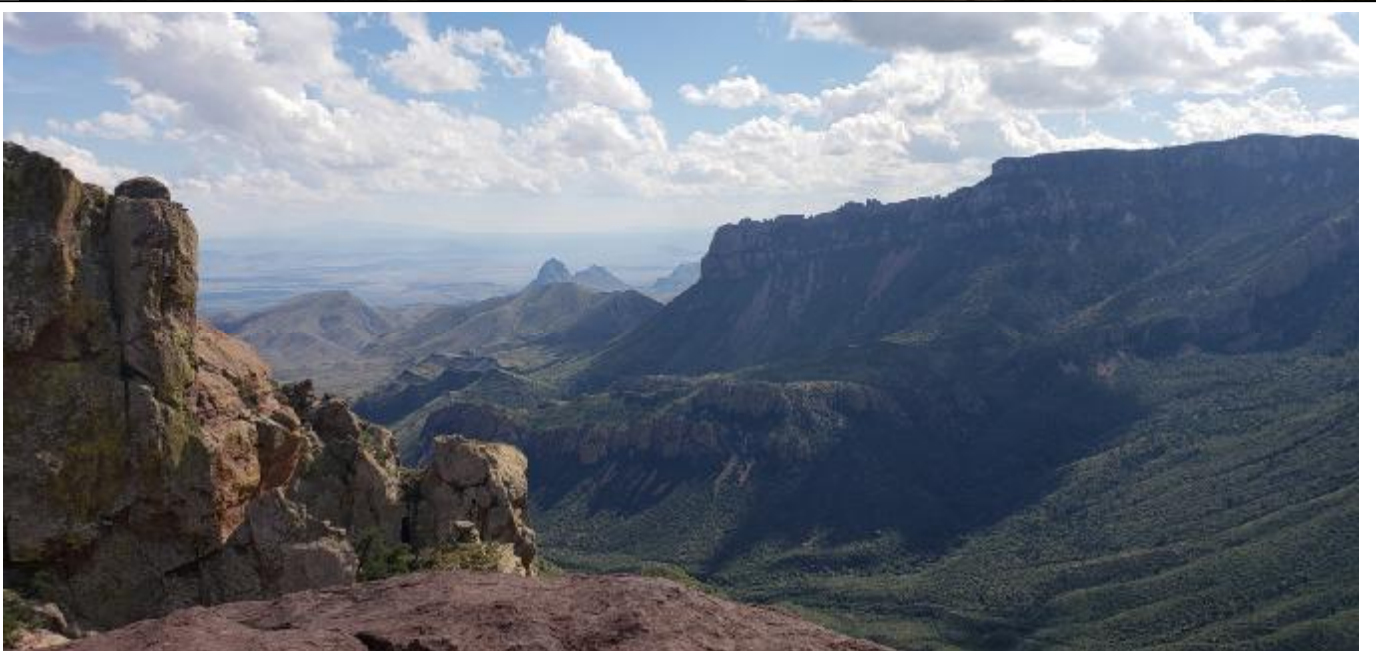
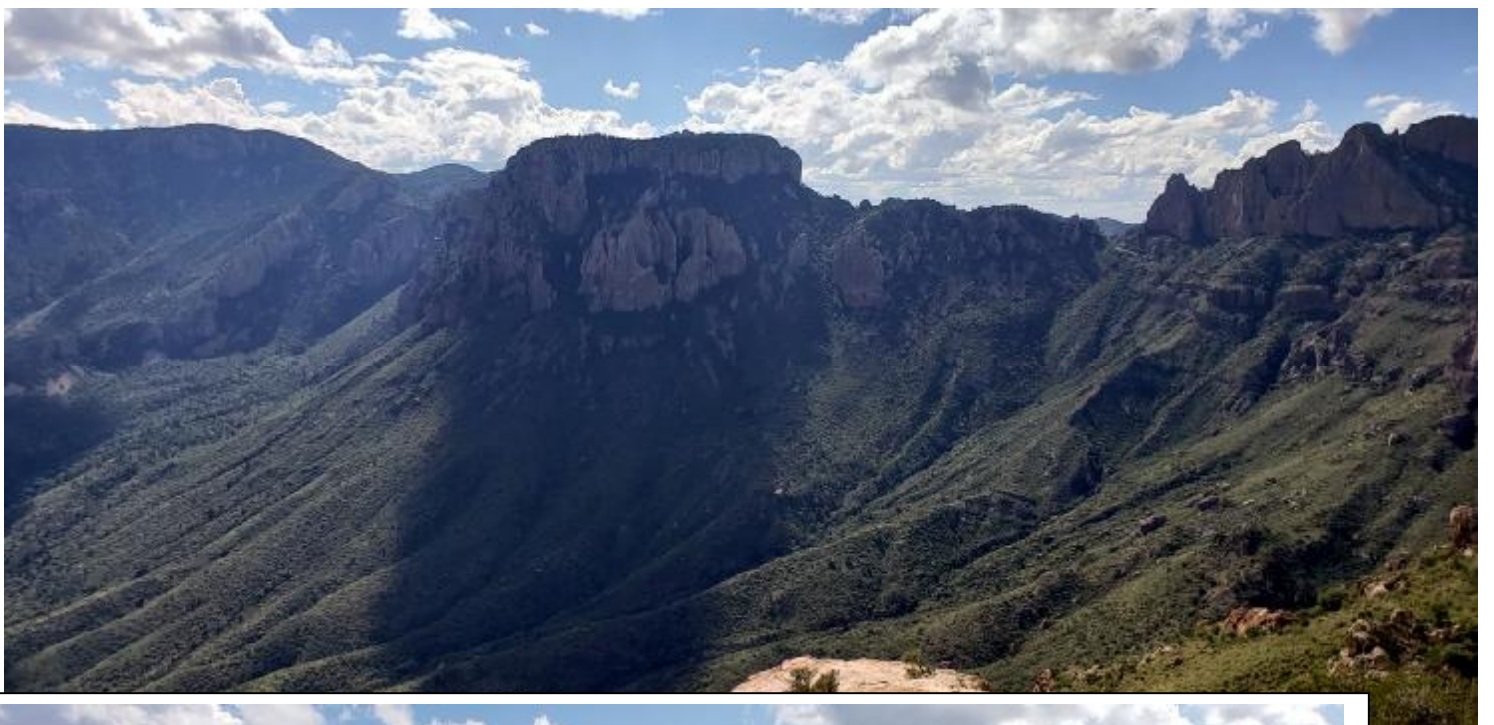














The hiking guide we used advised NOT to take the Lost Mine Trail. I don't remember why at this time, but we both thought it was great.



Grapevine Hills 2

Our Campsite for our last night in Big Bend National Park.

Overnight there was lightning like you would not believe. North, south, east and west. I will try and add a still from the video I shot. We will see.



An evening of Gin Rummy and Peanuts. Morgan beat me at both.

Well, no lightning pics, but it went on all night. We had very little rain. There must have been 10-15 strikes per second. It was incredible.

Tomorrow we pack up and head for the airport.

Goodnight