



In Search of Eldorado

Day 40
Wednesday

February 13th

Tucson
To
Maricopa

Weather
60's and Cloudy



Hello to Family & Friends

After a little research I decided not to drive all the way to the Saguaro West visitor center. There is another loop road here in the Saguaro West section, but it's not paved. I found that a trail connects to the road about half way there, and part of that trail leads to the Petroglyph Trail which is normally accessed from the loop road. This way I can do more than the three-tenths from the parking lot and avoid the dirt & gravel road at the same time.

If anyone was watching me they must have thought I was crazy. The map showed the trail connecting to the road just south of a 'T' intersection. I drove past with my eyes peeled, saw a couple wider gaps in the undergrowth, but no signs or parking area to indicate a trailhead. I pulled to the shoulder, both of which are very wide here, and made a U-turn, driving slowly back past the intersection. Hmm, another U-turn and this time I drove along the shoulder to what I thought was a gap. I locked the RV and took a short stroll up the wash to reconnoiter. I did find a trail marker and an arrow pointing to the north, but I wanted to go south. I found another trail marker another hundred feet along the wash with an arrow pointing straight ahead. "I am sooo confused."

Back to the RV and the internet. Another U-turn back to the intersection and frustration is setting in. Another U-turn and another internet search. Eureka!! I found a description of the trail. It seems the first site I read only named the trail north from the road, with no name for the south trail to the petroglyphs. It also explained that the trail just follows the wash until it hits the petroglyph trail.

Hat, hiking poles, snack, water, ready to stroll.

The plaque pictured above was one-tenth of a mile from the loop road trail. The eight-tenths is back the way I came.

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!'



I saw three or four of these little dens along the way. Nothing in them that I could see or hear.

The entire trail was following the wash. Upstream on the way there and downstream on the way back



Prehistoric Rock Art

Since there are only three plaques today I will make them big enough to read

The rock art found within Saguaro National Park was created by the prehistoric Hohokam people. They may have pecked these petroglyphs more than a thousand years ago while on hunting and gathering expeditions. As we discover more about these petroglyphs we develop a better understanding of the Hohokam culture.

Rock art is found throughout the American Southwest, wherever prehistoric peoples lived or journeyed. At Saguaro National Park many expressions of rock art, known as petroglyphs, were pecked into stones.

We do not know what these petroglyphs mean. They could have religious or ceremonial significance. They may be solstice markers, clan symbols, decorative motifs, or simply ancient graffiti.

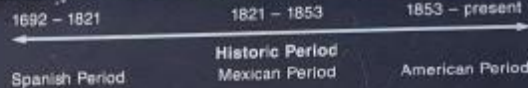


Petroglyphs at Signal Hill conform to the distinctive Hohokam style. In Tucson, abstract designs outnumber life forms at most sites. Human stick figures, game animals, dogs, lizards, snakes, and geometric shapes are frequently portrayed. Spirals and designs with circles are quite common and often are part of elaborate meander or net designs. Simple Hohokam stick figures contrast with filled-in bodies typical of Anasazi petroglyphs. Some of the rock art designs made here appear on Hohokam pottery.

Environmental conditions and visitors take their toll on the rock art. Saguaro National Park has an active program to monitor the condition of this and other cultural resource sites. Help preserve these irreplaceable works of art by staying on the trail. Do not climb on the rocks.

Saguaro National Park

Historic Period



In this part of America, the first documented European contact with American Indians occurred in the late 1500s when the Jesuits established missions along the rivers near here.



Padre Eusebio Kino and his fellow missionaries first visited the Tucson Basin in 1692. Over the following centuries, Indian people were heavily affected by Spanish, Mexican, and American settlers.

The Spanish Period (1692–1821)

From 1692 to 1821 the Spanish established more than two dozen missions and presidios (military outposts) in southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico. These Spaniards introduced new forms of religion, dress, speech, mining, domestic animals, agricultural crops, tools, and diseases.

The Mexican Period (1821–1853)

Mexican independence in 1821 brought more change. More Mexican farmers, ranchers, and miners moved into southern Arizona taking some of the best land for farms and ranches.

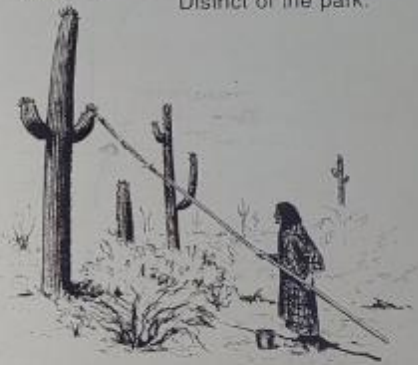


The American Period (1853–present)

The United States gained this territory through the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. The American Indian people now lived under a third flag in as many centuries. Southern Arizona boomed with prospecting and mining after the American Civil War. Many miners searched for gold with limited success. However, copper proved to be the most important metal in



Arizona during the twentieth century. Large scale mining operations, such as the Silverbell Mine across this valley, can be seen all over southern Arizona. Although the Tucson Mountains did not contain rich deposits of ore, prospectors worked more than 140 claims in the Tucson Mountain District of the park.



Although many changes have affected the American Indians of the southwest, they continue to practice many traditional activities. The annual saguaro fruit harvest on park land is but one of these significant traditions still practiced by the Tohono O'odham people.

Saguaro National Park

Prehistoric People

10,000 – 8,000 B.C.

8,000 B.C. – A.D. 200

A.D. 200 – 1450

1450 – 1692

Paleo-Indian

Archaic

Hohokam
(Petroglyphs)

Protohistoric

The earliest known occupation of Southern Arizona was by Paleo-Indian hunters from about 10,000 to 8,000 B.C. They were followed by Archaic period hunter-gatherers. Hohokam, "the people who have gone," is the name given to the prehistoric people that lived in central and southern Arizona from A.D. 200 until 1450. Present day Pima and Tohono O'odham may be their descendants.

Settling in villages with satellite camps for farming, hunting, and plant gathering in southeast Arizona, the Hohokam were desert farmers of corn, beans, squash, and cotton. They practiced canal irrigation in the Phoenix area. Some of these hand dug canals were 30 feet wide, 10 feet deep and more than 10 miles long. In the Tucson Basin the Hohokam practiced dry farming, often building extensive terraced gardens or planting crops along rivers, streams, and washes.

The desert provided a large variety of materials for subsistence. Hohokam people gathered wild plants such as cholla, saguaro, prickly pear, mesquite, agave, and palo verde. They hunted rabbits, deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn. Stone knives, arrowheads, throwing sticks, and the bow and arrow were important tools for these ancient people.

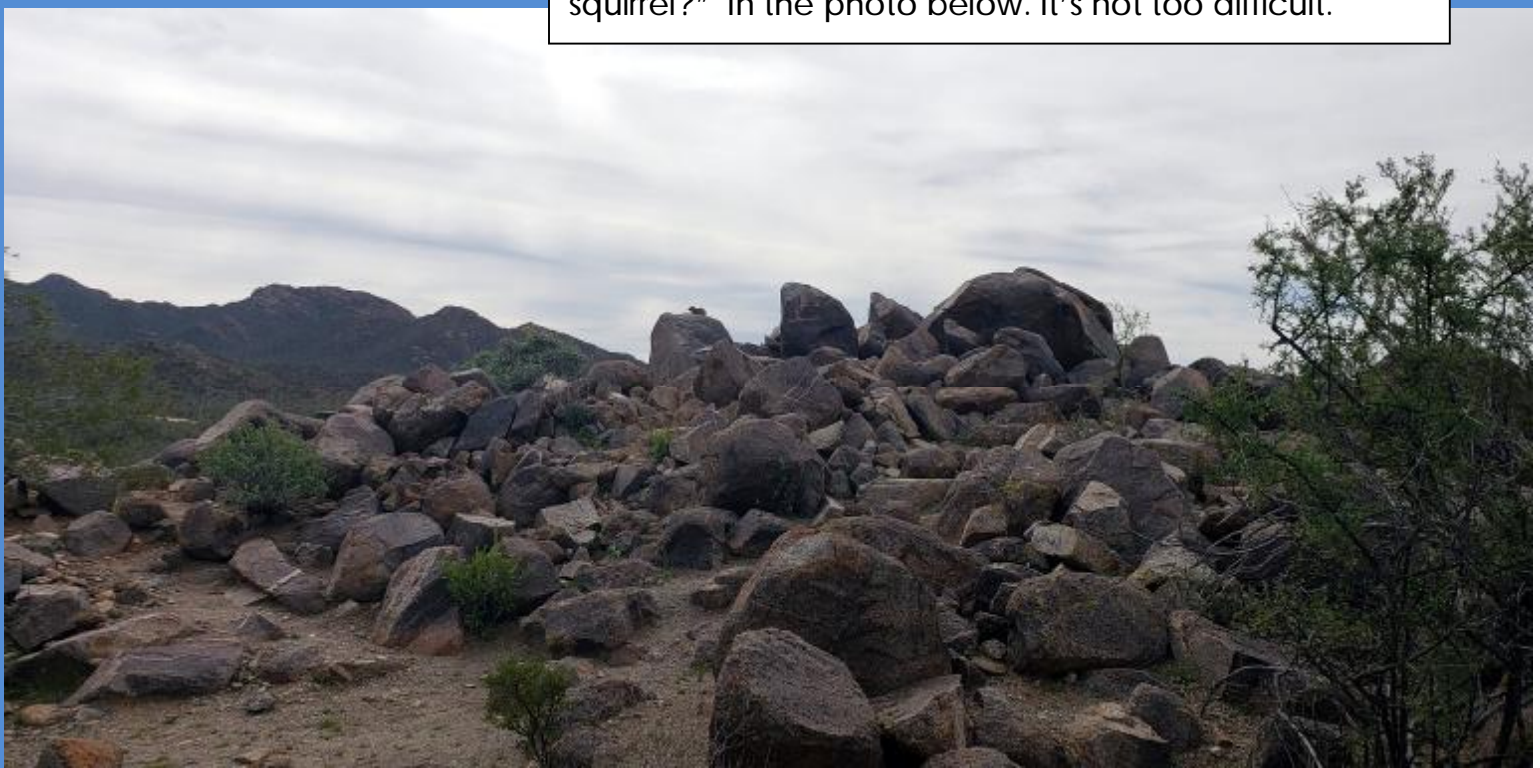
Included in daily life were religious activities, making pottery and baskets, crafting shell jewelry, and trading with other peoples. The Hohokam had no domestic animals other than the dog. Horses, cattle, and sheep were introduced by the Spanish.

During the protohistoric period, between the Hohokam occupation and Spanish contact, the area appears to have been occupied by Sobajpur (Upper Piman) and Tohono O'odham people.

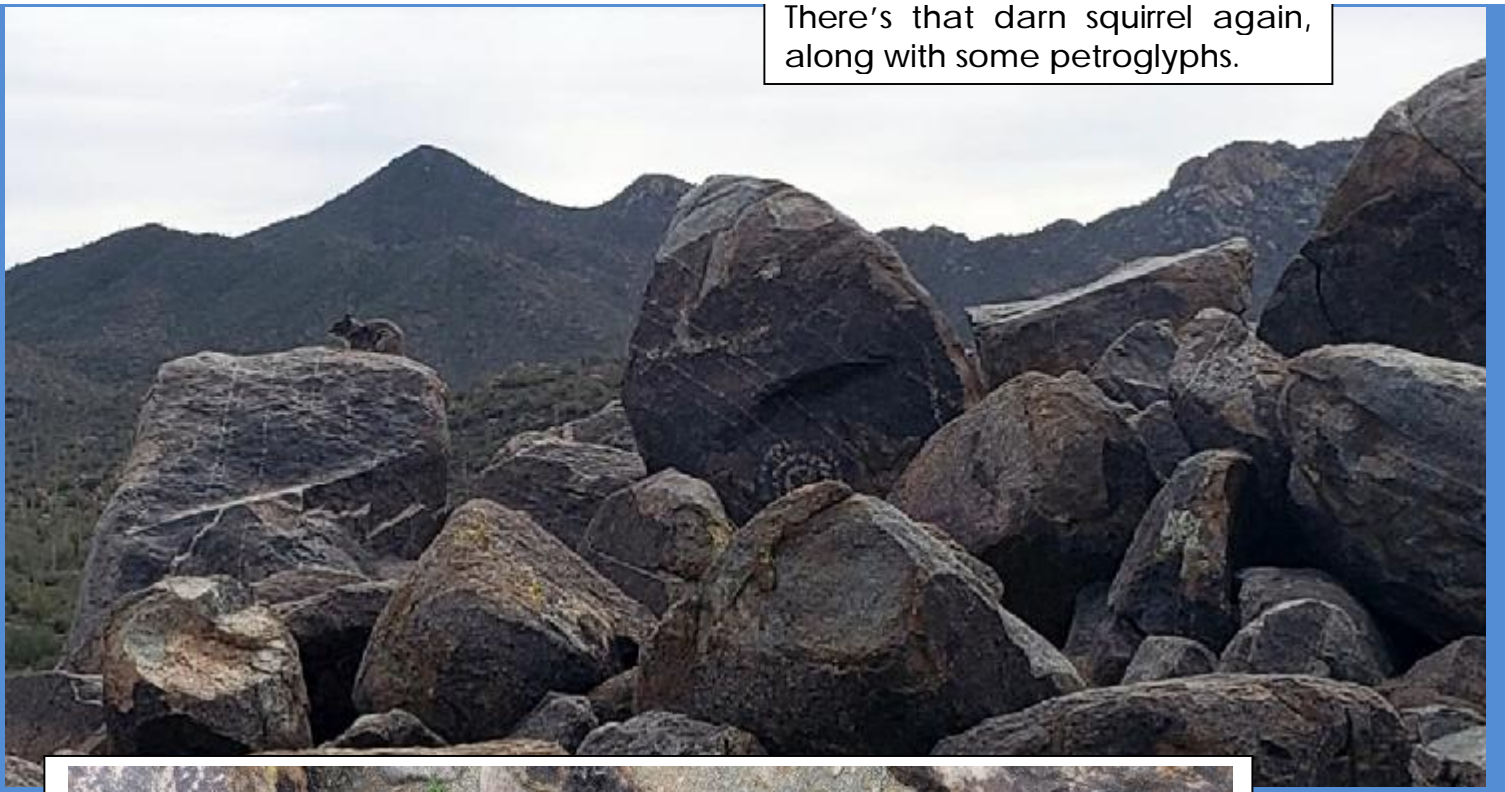


Saguaro National Park

Let's play "Where's Waldo" Actually it's "Where's the squirrel?" In the photo below. It's not too difficult.



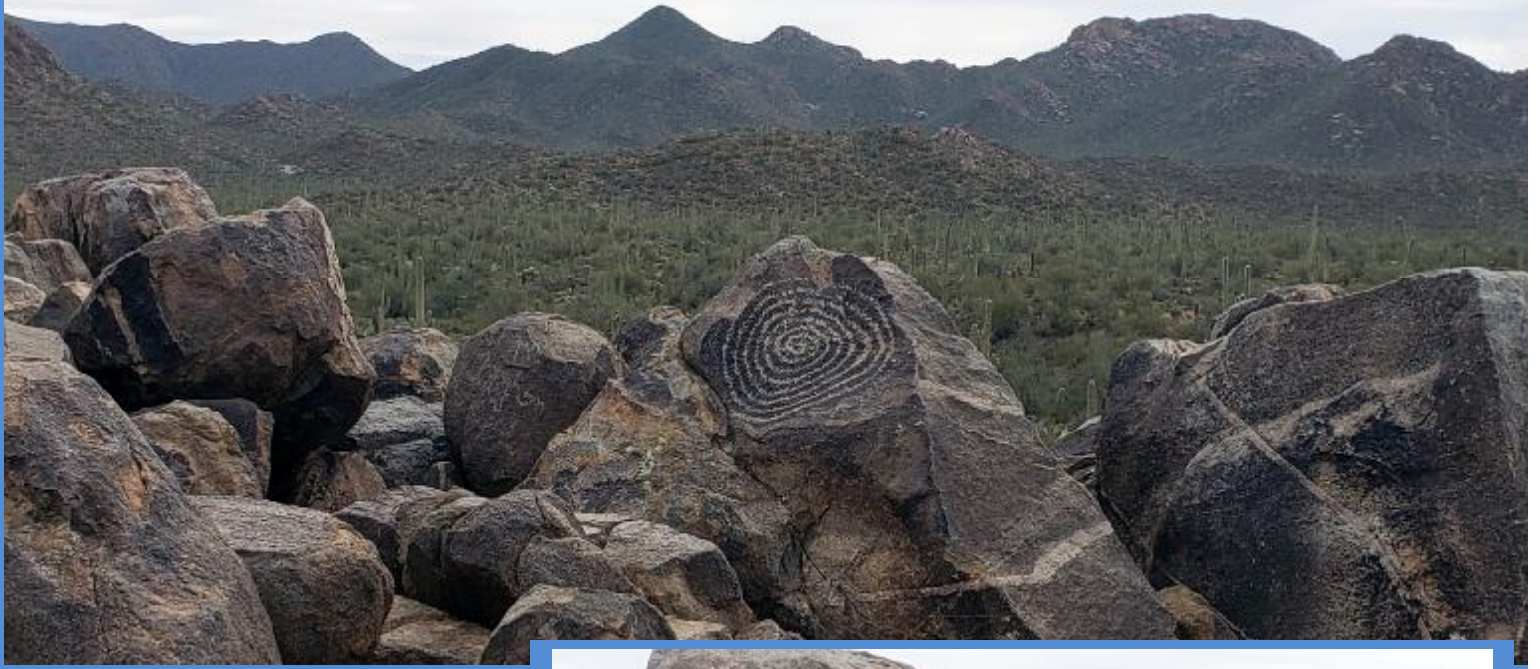
There's that darn squirrel again,
along with some petroglyphs.

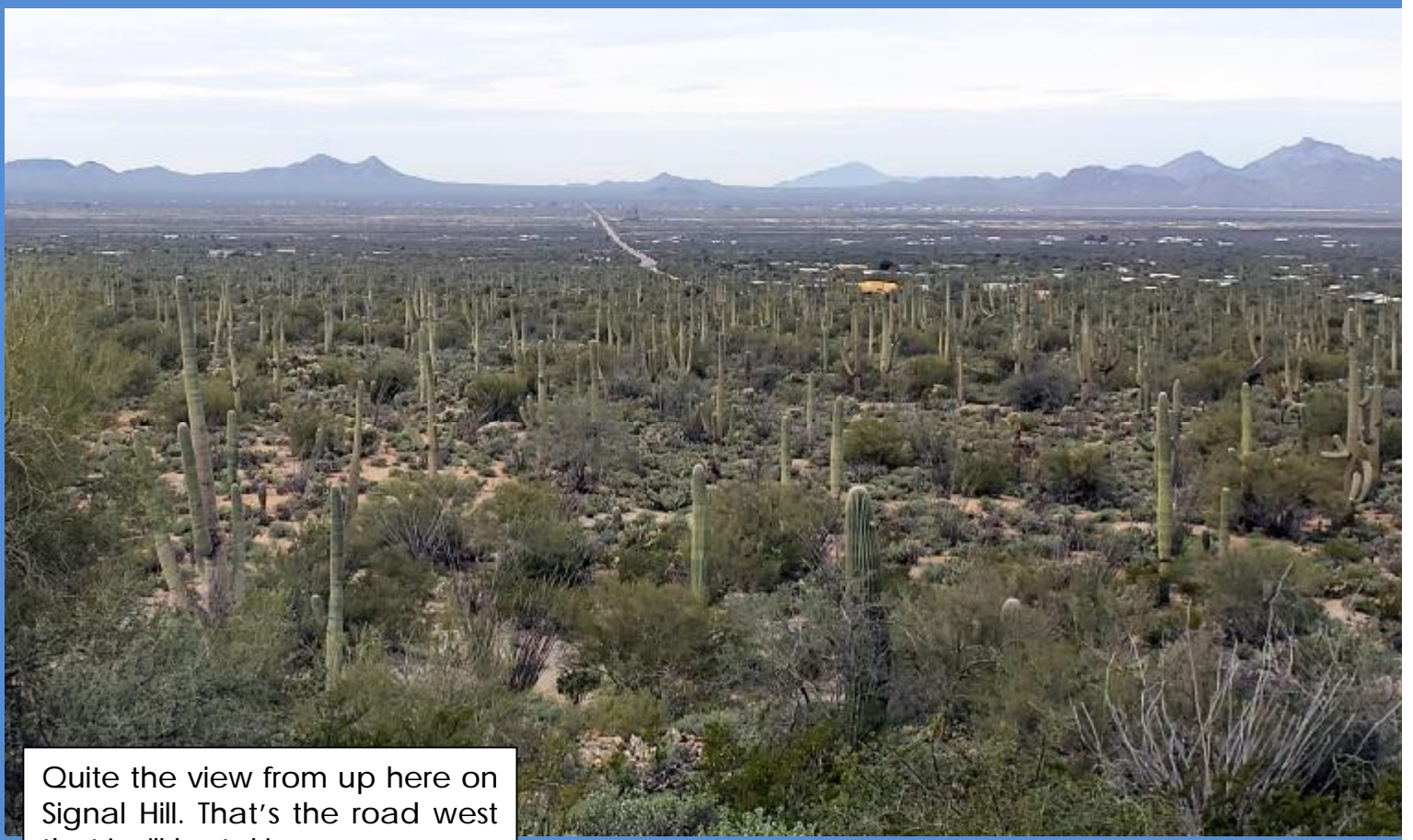


I read that no one has been
able to decipher them. If you
ask me this kind of looks like
a guy on a bike



The Circle of Life?





Quite the view from up here on Signal Hill. That's the road west that I will be taking.

On the left is the parking area and picnic grounds from the loop road. I took the path less traveled, the wash.





These signs were the only indication that I was in Ironwood Forest National Monument. The sign on the left does not mention it at all. The sign on the right, just at the top.

I drove this road for eleven miles until it turned to dirt and dead-ended at the Silverbell Open Pit Mine. Run by the same company as yesterday's mine tour. No tours here though. I had a white pickup stop next to the RV which I had pulled off to the side. I think he saw me playing solitaire and eating my lunch, so I wasn't a threat.



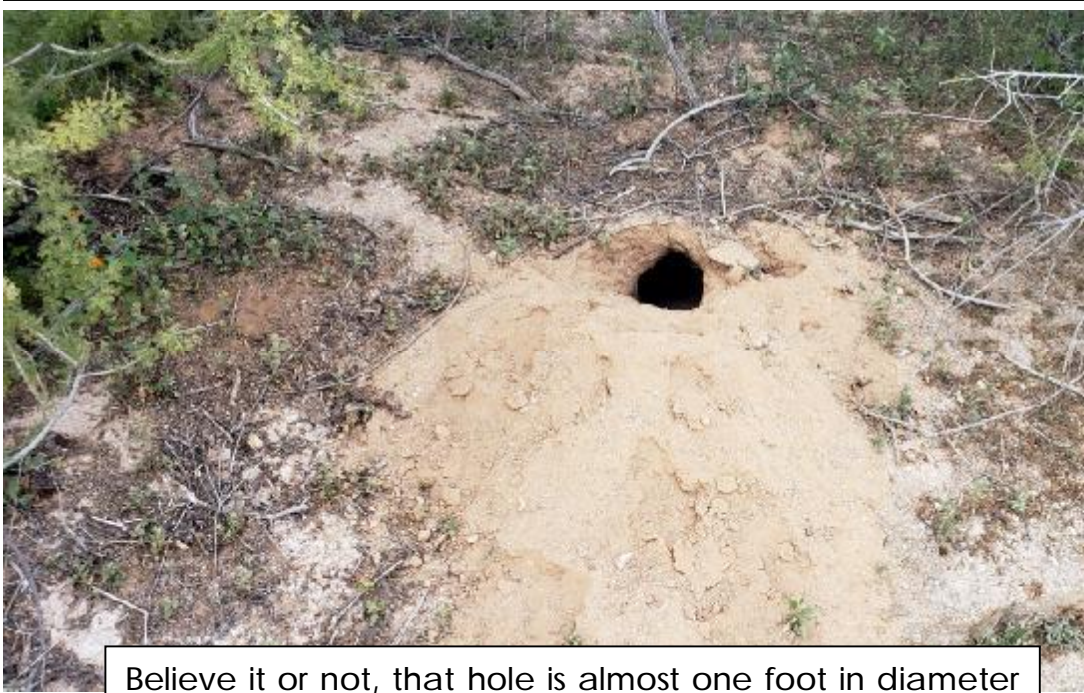
This is more like it. Although the southern half is bisected by I-8 (I never even knew there was an I-8 until I got down here) the northern section is bisected by AZ 238. Once again it was very hard to find trailhead locations.



my intended trail, road 8004. Unfortunately, the orange area below no longer allows vehicle access due to damage from off-roading vehicles. Naturally, the hiking trails are in the yellow section above the orange section. This means a six mile hike to the trailhead and a ten mile trail hike, then a six mile hike back. I'm not prepared for that. Since it was getting close to sunset I just walked 30 minutes down the trail and turned around.



Excellent! This sign was almost at my turn-around point. One of my goals was to hike this trail, mostly because of all the history that took place along here. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw it.



Believe it or not, that hole is almost one foot in diameter and it looks pretty fresh. I wonder what lives there.



There certainly is a difference in vegetation here, hardly any cacti at all. Here and there you find a Saguaro. Much more open ground than most other parks.



The road ahead.



A lone sentinel, standing tall at the crest of the hill, silhouetted by the gray and threatening clouds, mutely guards this ancient passage to the next valley. Ha ha. Ok, so I'm no Hemingway. I just thought it was interesting how a day or two ago I complained about too many cacti, and here that Saguaro Cactus at the crest of the hill is the only one in sight.

I would call today an accomplishment. I visited Saguaro National Park, Ironwood National Monument and Sonoran Desert National Monument all in one day, did some hiking in two of them and ate lunch in the third. That kind of day doesn't happen too often.

From the trail I drove to a Harrah's Casino in Maricopa for the night. It is supposed to rain tomorrow, 100% chance, so I am not sure what I will be doing. I have already heard a few raindrops on the roof.

There is a Casa Grande National Monument towards Phoenix, that one is new to me. I had never heard of it until I saw the sign. I did take the exit (trying to make it four parks in one day) but the sign said 18 miles so I headed back to Sonoran Desert N.M.

Until next time.....