



# In Search of Eldorado



## Hello to Family & Friends

I decided that instead of going back to Chiricahua National Monument and doing some more hiking, I would push on north and try to get more National Parks and Monuments visited.

I headed north on HWY 191 towards Safford then east to Clifton. On the way was a side trip I had hoped to make on the Black Hills Back Country Byway. I found the turn with the sign above and started down the dirt and gravel road.



But it was too rough, especially for 21 miles. Additionally, all the signs had bullet holes, as well as the windshield of the car below, parked near the road. I didn't want to run into anyone that might feel the need to shoot at such a large target as the RV.

Day 52

Monday

February 25th

Bowie  
To  
Springerville

Weather  
50's and Sunny

## 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!'



So I pushed on to Clifton and Morenci, getting a couple scenic shots along the way.



Mt. Graham I believe, 10,724 feet

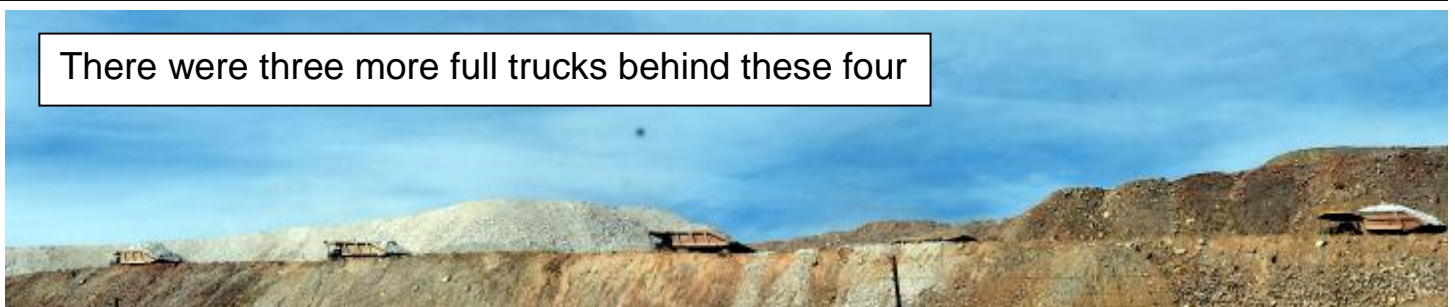




Clifton and Morenci are sister cities, and they exist because of mining, open pit mining again, but not just any open pit. The Morenci Mine is the largest open pit copper mine in Arizona. This thing is huge. Just a couple photos to show the size.



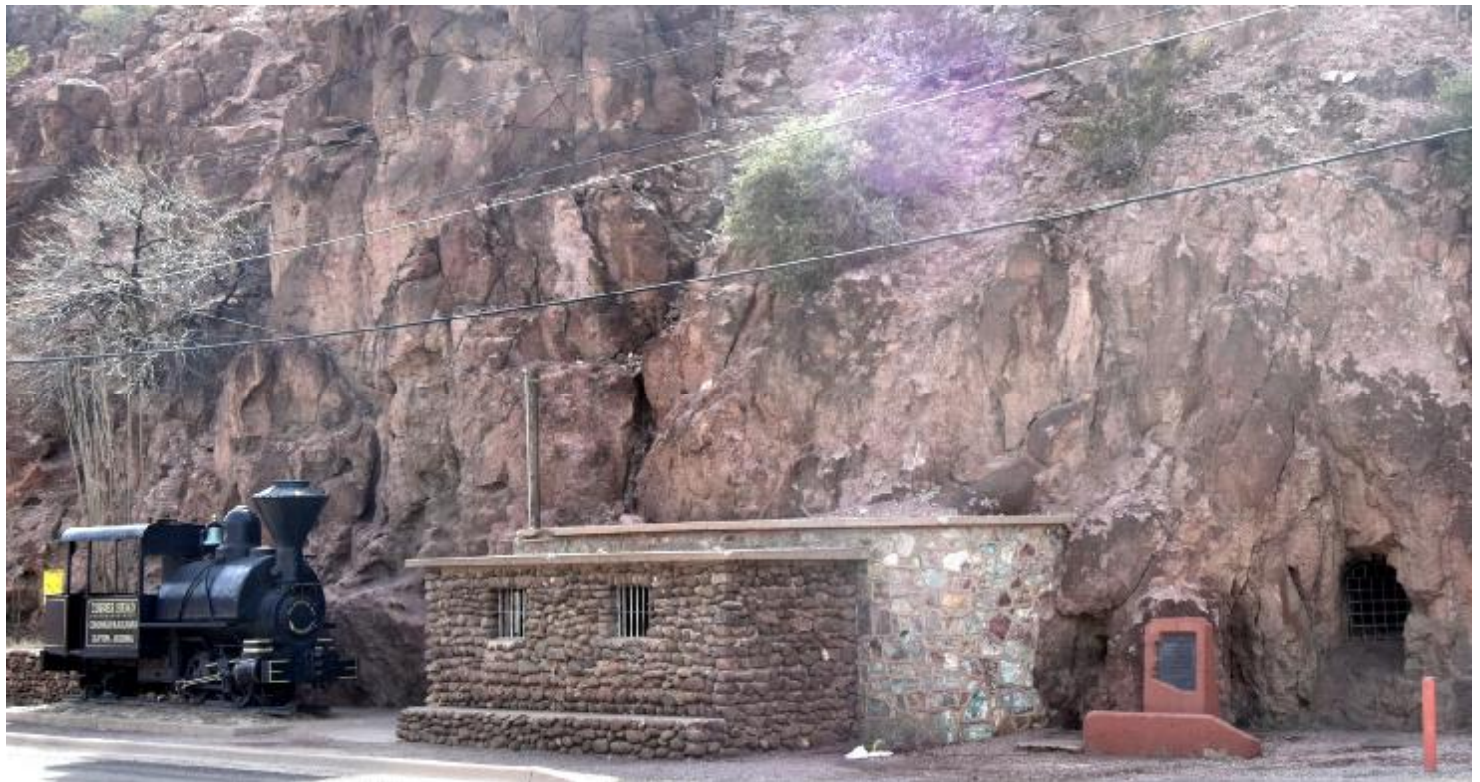
There were three more full trucks behind these four



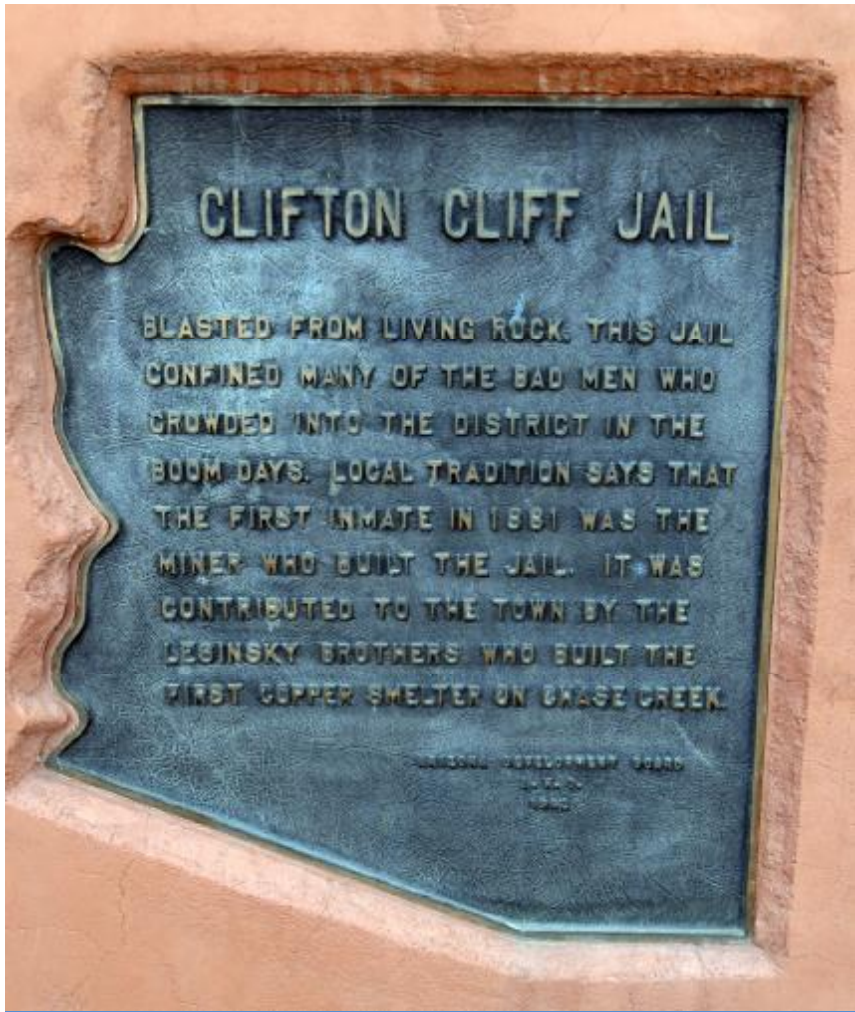


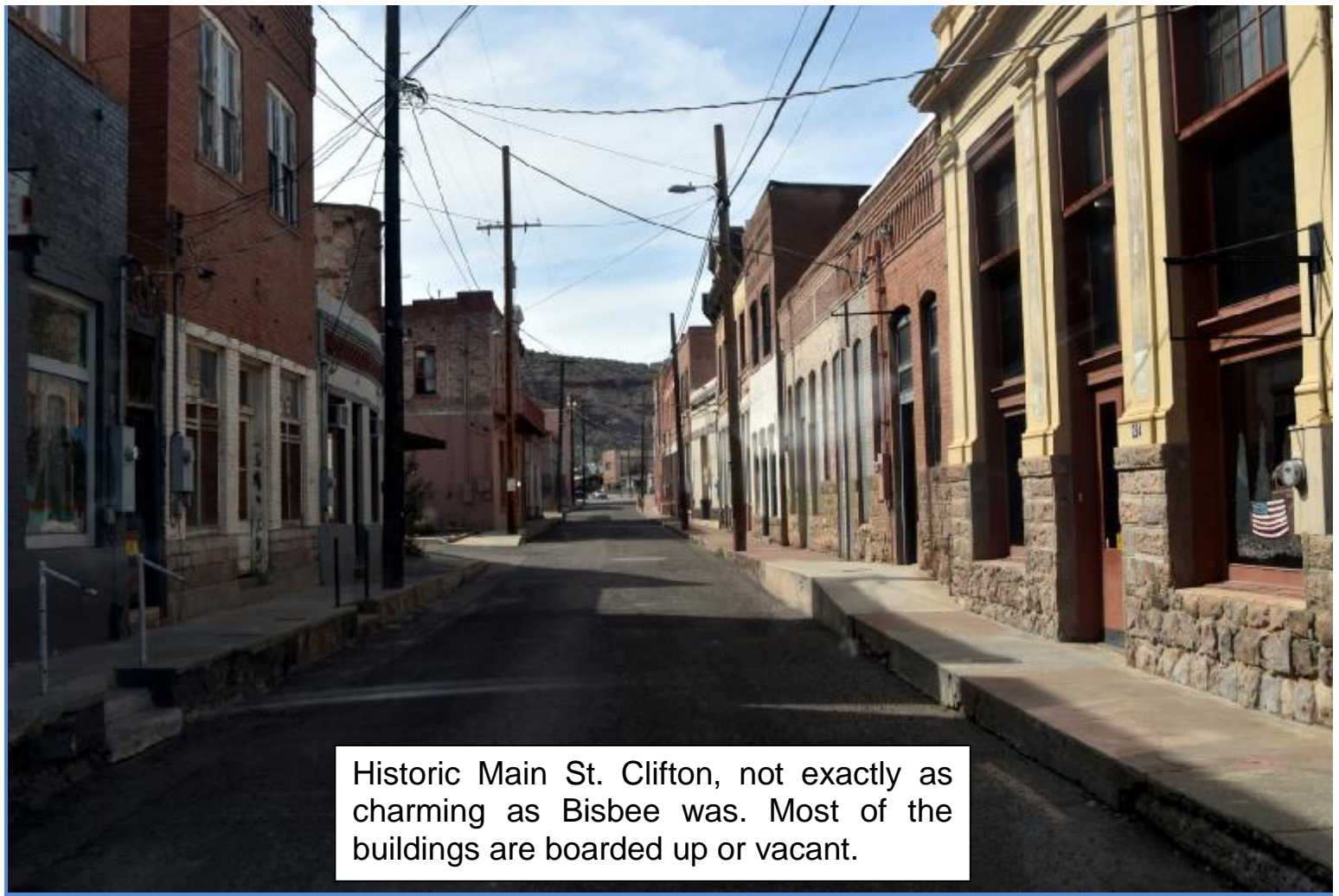


The train depot is again home to the visitor center



This is from Roadside America – Clifton's first jail was built in 1878 by blasting two cells out of a solid granite cliff. The stonemason who built the jail went out celebrating after he received his check for the finished job, got drunk, shot up the dance hall, and wound up being the first guest at the new jail.





Historic Main St. Clifton, not exactly as charming as Bisbee was. Most of the buildings are boarded up or vacant.



Time to get to the scenic portion of our trip today, the Coronado Trail Scenic Byway. This one is paved at least. It's purported to have 460 curves in the 91 miles from Morenci to Alpine, some at only 10 MPH. From a modest 4,747 feet at Morenci, the road climbs to 9,370 feet a short way before reaching Alpine.





I stopped at this pullout for lunch, arriving from the left and will leave to the right. Below is my lunchtime view.







I hope you enjoy the scenery





Keep in mind that some of these were taken from a moving vehicle. Granted, it might only have been going 15 or 20 MPH, but it's not easy to hold the camera with one hand, focus with another hand, keep a third hand on the wheel and keep one eye on the road and one eye looking through the lens.

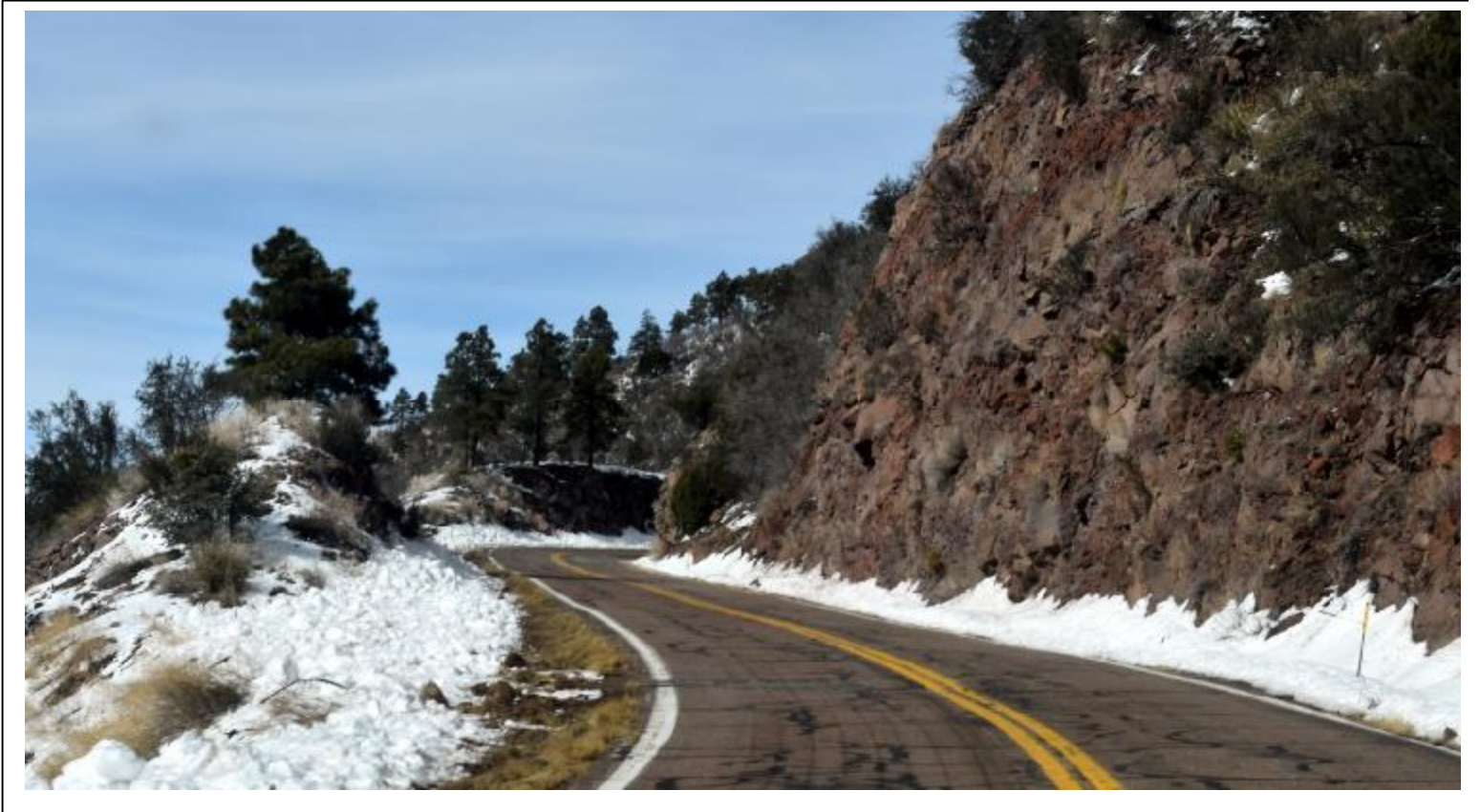






Mountain grazing land







The Wallow Fire, which was started in 2011 by two careless campers from Tucson, torched more than 550,000 acres of gorgeous forest, including most of Escudilla Mountain. Some of the worst evidence of the fire can be seen just before Alpine, but the scars start well before then. It was a mammoth wildfire, Arizona's largest ever on record. The fire cost government agencies \$72 million to suppress and about \$37 million more so far for assessment, cleanup and rebuilding efforts.

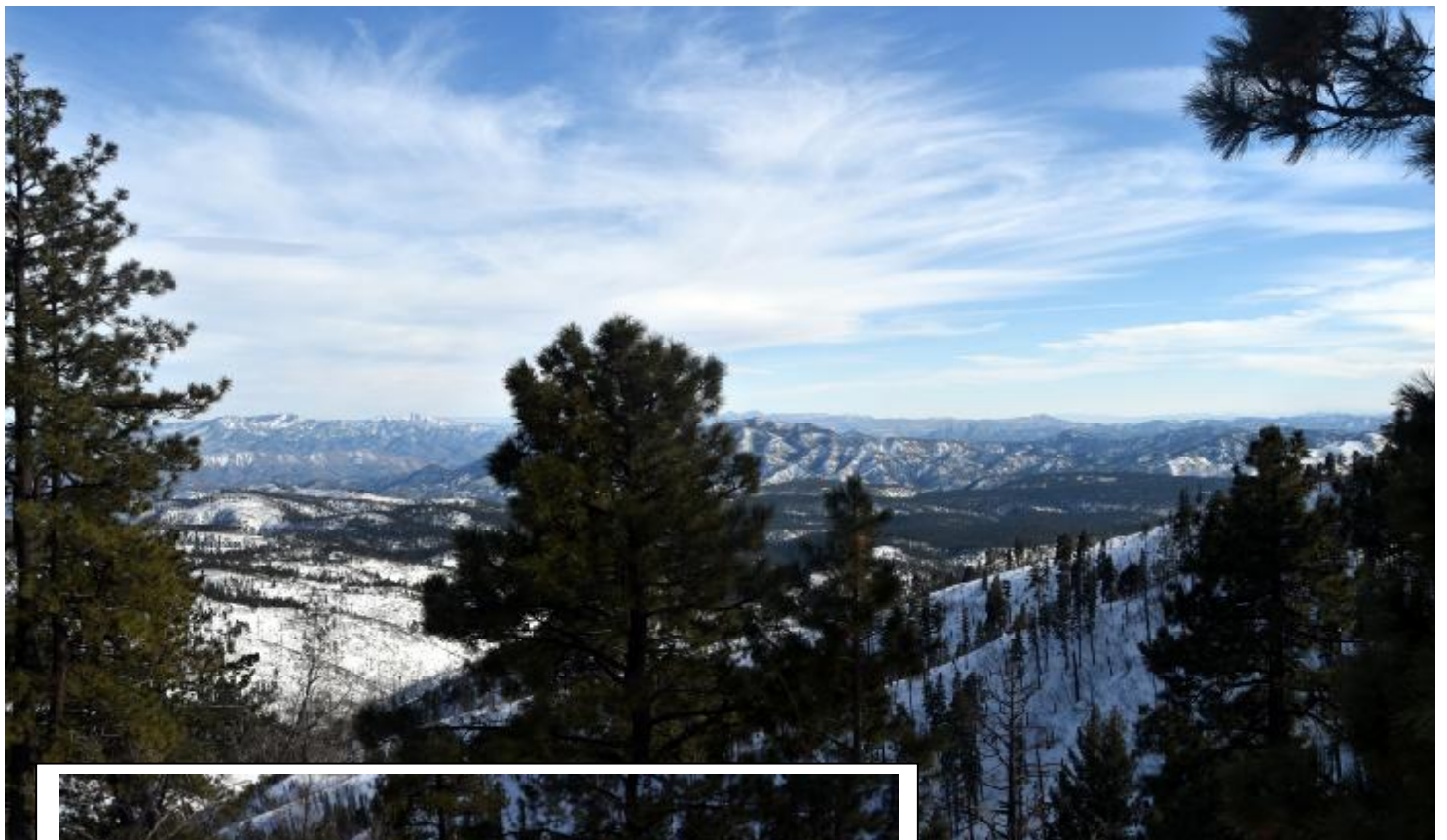




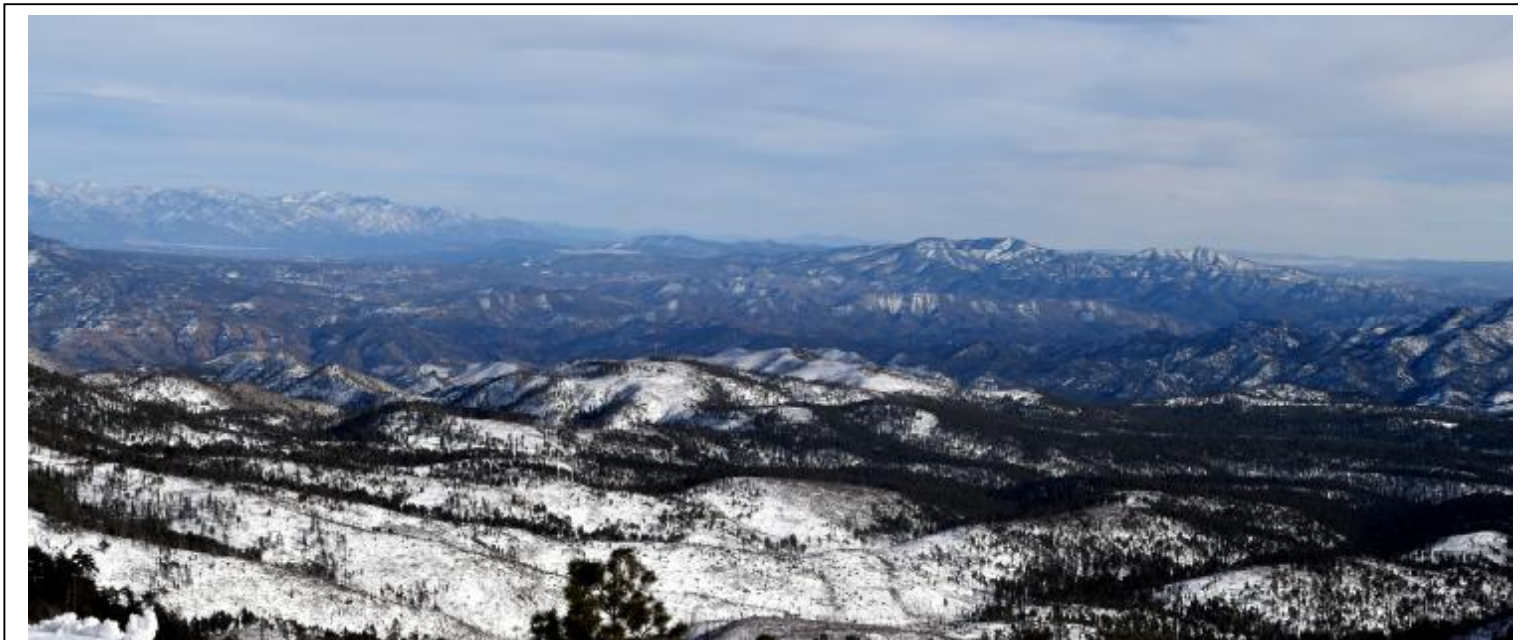
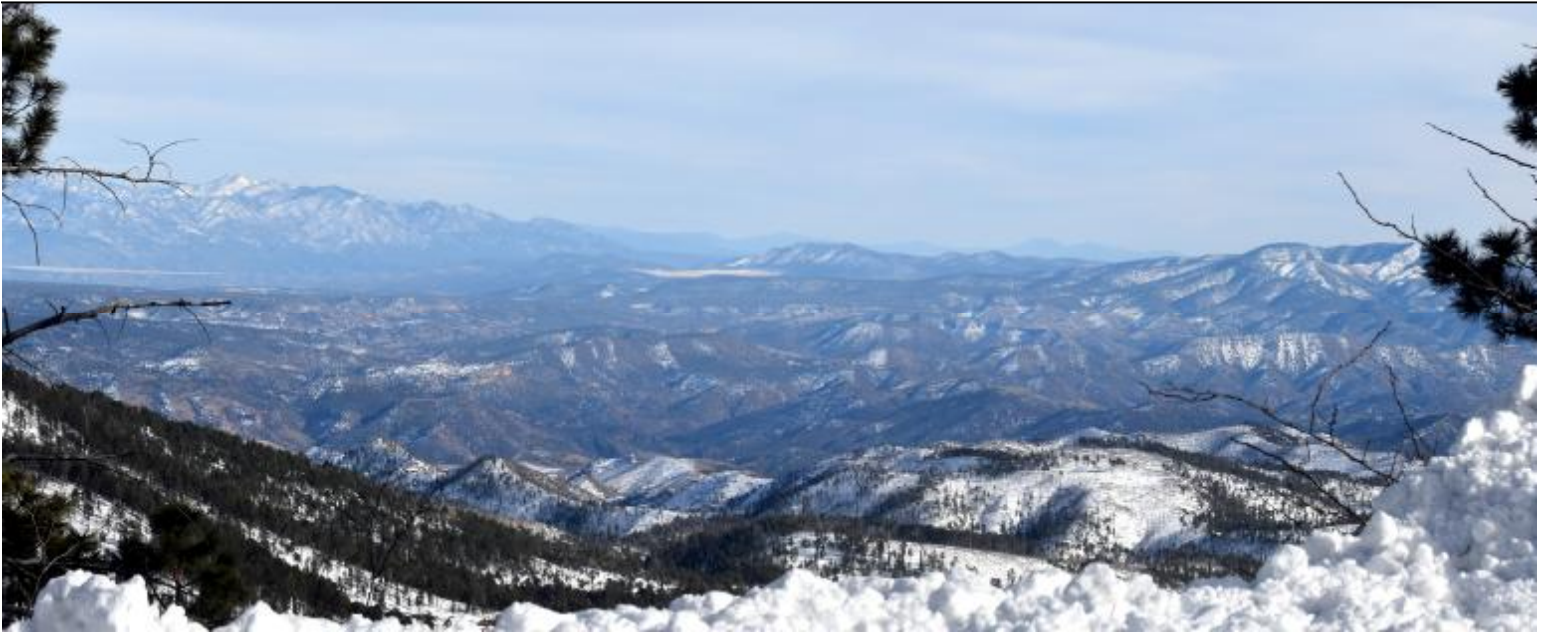
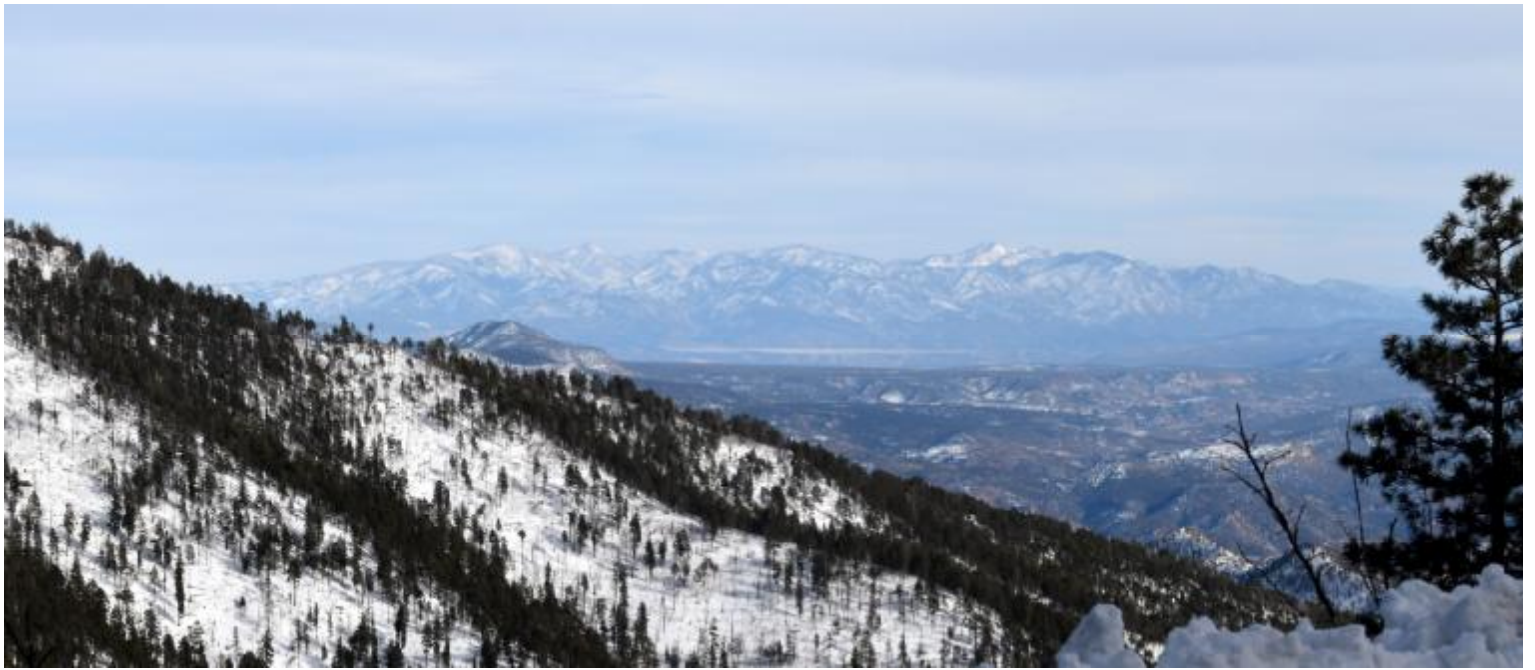




HOLY COW!!! It's a cow. This is pretty high up at this point. I stopped and opened the window and made moo sounds at him, but he just gave me that "great, it's another stupid human making strange sounds again" look.



Looking over the edge. There are no guardrails along the entire drive. It was scary at times how easy it would be to have a lapse in attention and take a 2000 foot shortcut down the mountainside.





There were several warning signs for Elk I was surprised to see. But I figured Elk are usually looking for food, and with everything burned up around here there would be no Elk, so I was maybe going a little faster than I wanted to. All of a sudden they were scattering. They must have been right in the road. These three are the only view I had with the camera.

After Alpine the road widens and straightens and the speed limit increases to 55 MPH, so even though, technically, Alpine to Springerville is part of the Byway, I am not including it.

There was very little traffic, maybe five or six cars coming south and I was only passed by one truck and I passed one car – just before seeing the Elk. The drive was fun even though I had to keep my eyes on the road most of the time. With so little traffic I was able to just stop in the middle of the road and take a picture without any worry, or at worst slow down to a virtual crawl until the view opened up. Very few of the pullouts or scenic views were plowed, so a springtime drive would probably be nice. The lady at the VC told me she always used to drive up to Alpine when the leaves were changing.

I thought the nights were getting warmer, low of 19 tonight. Brrrrrr. I drove through the Avery RV Park in Springerville but didn't like the look of camping on snow and mud. Right across the street is an old commercial vehicle inspection station. It looks like it has been vacant for years. My app told me there were three truck spaces and it was ok to stay one night. So here I am.

It was another decent sunset but I didn't have a clear view, so no photos. As long as I don't get kicked out by the police sometime during the night, I will probably head towards Petrified Forest.

Until tomorrow.....