



In Search of Eldorado



Hello to Family & Friends

made an earlier start today so as to get in as much as possible. Forty miles up the road was the Hubbell Trading Post.

Welcome

Hubbell Trading Post, established in 1878, is the oldest continually operated trading post on the Navajo reservation. J. L. Hubbell, whose family operated the trading post for nearly 90 years, was known among the Navajo as trustworthy and honest. His trading post became a pillar of the community, playing a large role in helping Navajo families rebuild their lives after the Long Walk.

What is the “Long Walk” you ask? Ok, I’ll tell you. From 1864 to 1866 over 8,500 Navajo were exiled by the U.S. Army at Fort Sumner, New Mexico Territory, in an effort to ethnically cleanse the Navajo people. Colonel Christopher ‘Kit’ Carson was ordered to round up the Navajos and organize the Long Walk. In 1864 Carson launched a full scale assault, destroying everything in his path; hogans were burned, livestock killed, irrigated fields were destroyed, and those Navajos that resisted were killed. Alkaline soil, alkaline water and disease near Fort Sumner killed many, but I could not find any exact figures. In 1868 a treaty was signed creating the Navajo Indian Reservation, and it was the first time a tribes native lands had been ceded back to them. In June of 1868 the “Long Walk” took the remaining Navajo back to their land in the Arizona Territory.

Day 54

Wednesday

February 27th

Somewhere
To
Kayenta

Weather
40's and Sunny

Eldorado

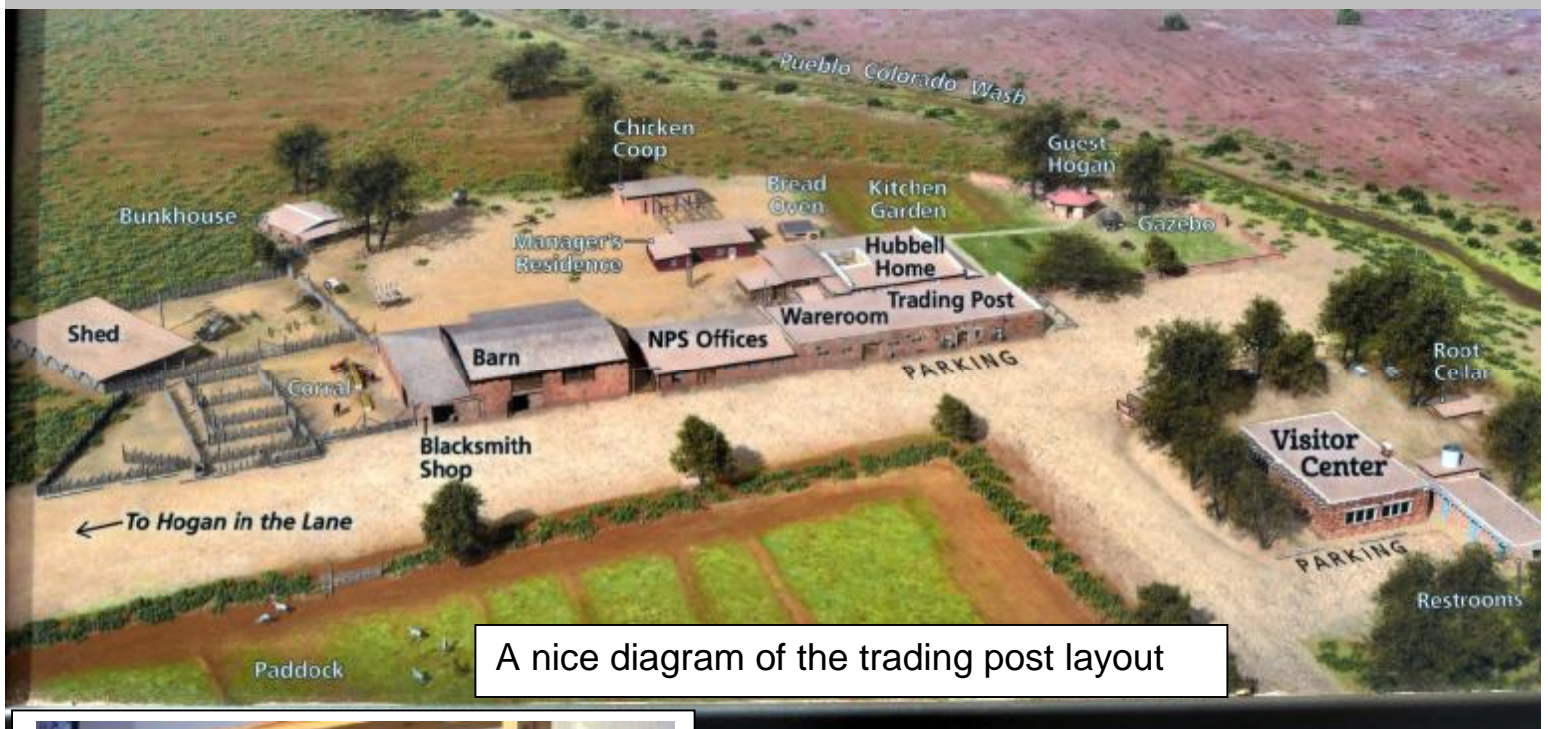
By Edgar Allen Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

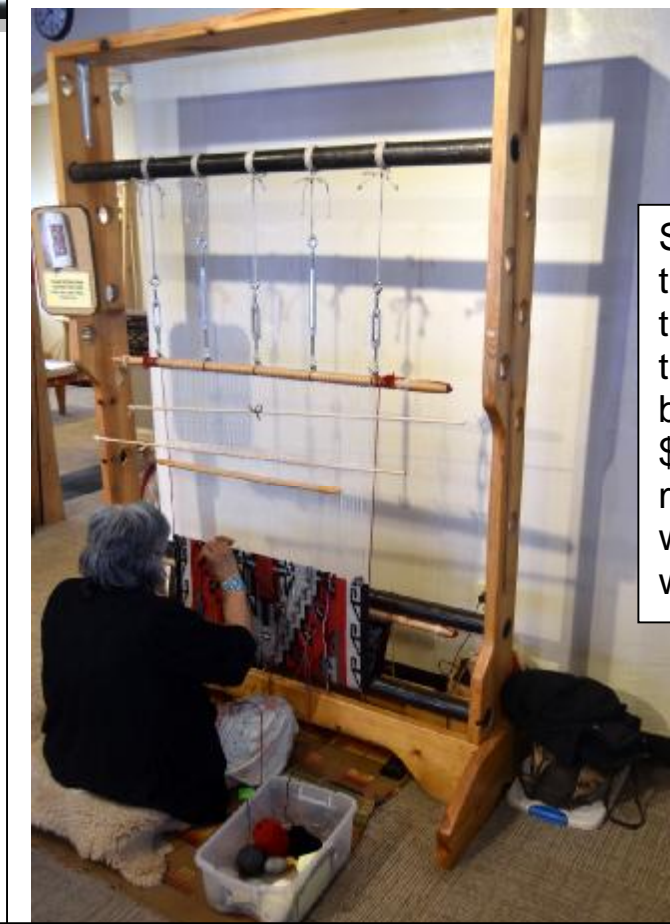
But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o’er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

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!’



A nice diagram of the trading post layout

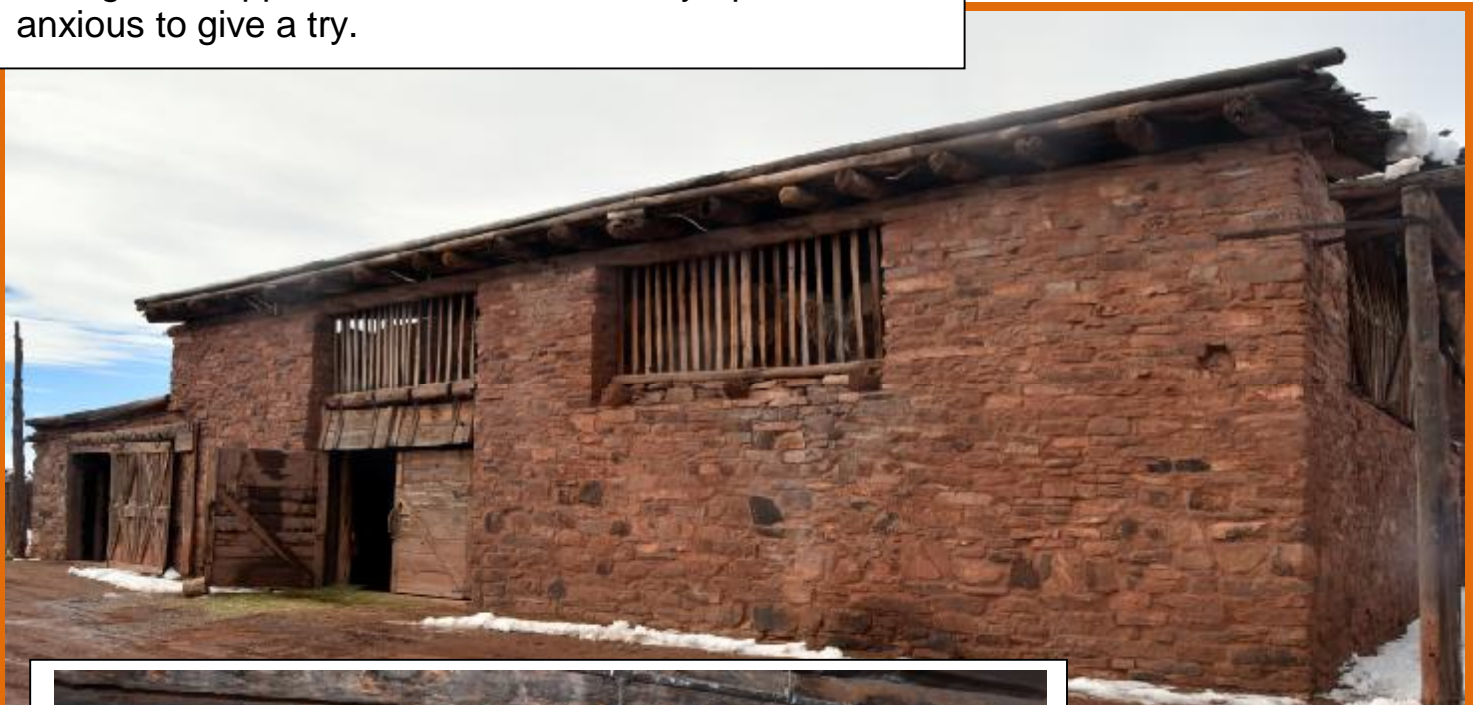


She was weaving this rug in the visitor center. I gave thought to getting three of these as souvenirs for the girls, but once I saw the price was \$1700 for a 25" x 27" rug, I mentally told the girls they were out of luck unless they wanted a doily.





I bought an Apple Cinnamon Pancake syrup which I am anxious to give a try.



This is the barn, blacksmith shop and corral. The ranger told me most everything was open, but I walked around trying doors and these were the only two I could get into.

Steve, the bunkhouse was not open.



The Hubbell Trading Post was interesting, but it could have been much more so with access to the guest house, Hubbell home, shed and bunkhouse. Of course, maybe they just didn't want to plow the snow to these buildings, but hey, that's what they get paid for, right?

On to the next stop.....



....which is Canyon de Chelly (shay) National Monument. This is where I was told to be watchful of the native inhabitants.

I like the little models made of real stone.

Below are some more.



Alright, there are a lot of photos here, this canyon is very photogenic, probably even more so without the snow, although it does add a nice touch. But I will keep my mouth shut unless I feel the need to open it and tell you something specific. Keep in mind that most of these cliff walls are 600 feet high. The camera just does not emphasize that enough. I did the north rim drive first.







600 feet straight down to the canyon floor. Note the tire tracks below.



I can't fit two of these shots on one page



Below is a close-up of the ruins

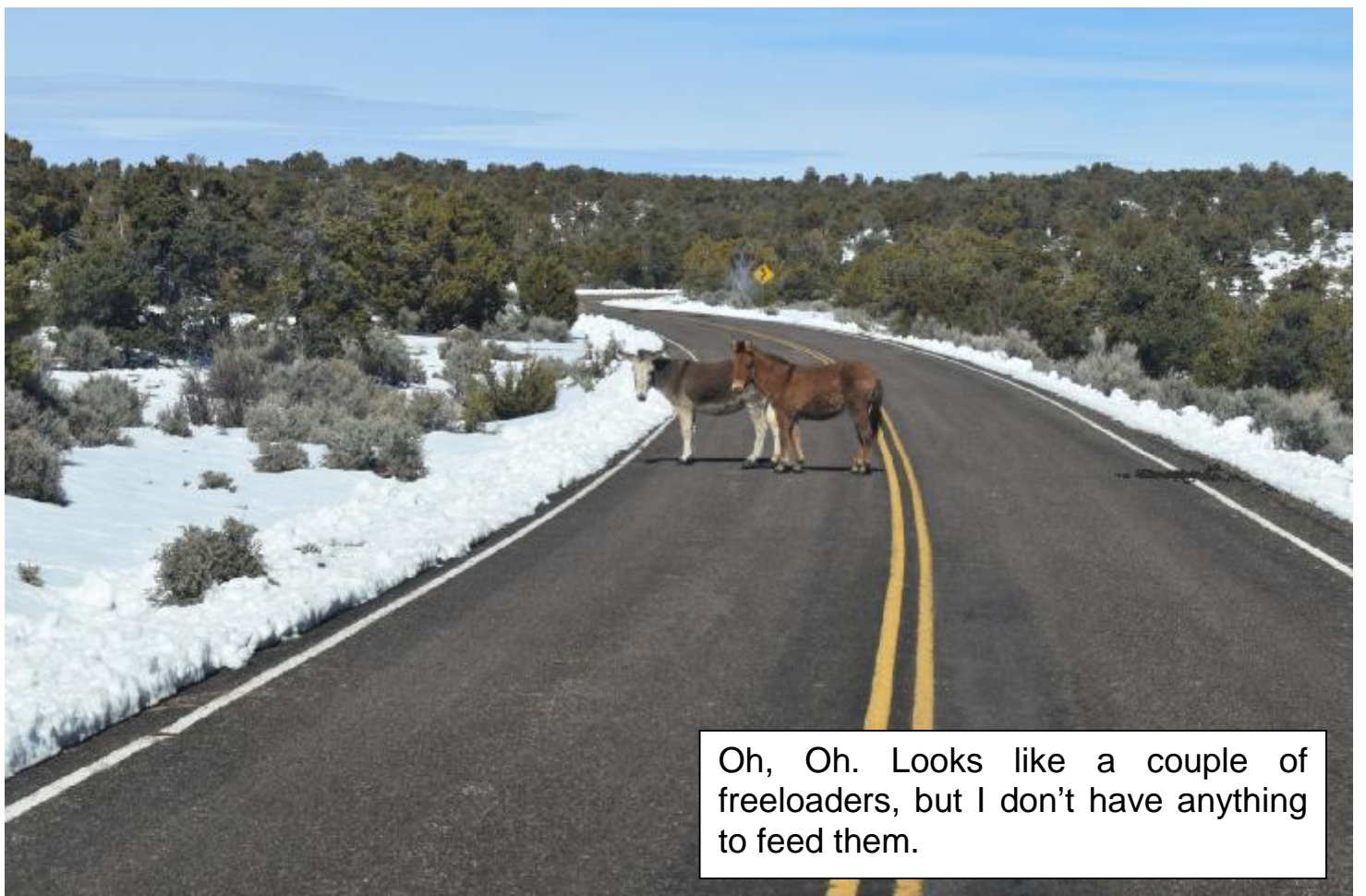




This may be a good time to tell you that people have lived in these canyons for 5,000 years. Many different cultures have lived here, and then moved on, to be replaced by another culture. Some 400 years ago the Navajo arrived. They built homes, brought sheep and goats and farmed the canyon floor. Many of the stone ruins are from before the Navajo.

At the canyon's mouth near Chinle, the canyon walls are only 30 feet high, but as you move deeper into the canyons the walls rise to a staggering 1000 above the floor. The Monument was established in 1931 to preserve this record of human history and encompasses nearly 34,000 acres, all of it within the Navajo Reservation. The Monument is administered by the National Park Service, but these canyons are home to the *Dine*, the Navajo people.



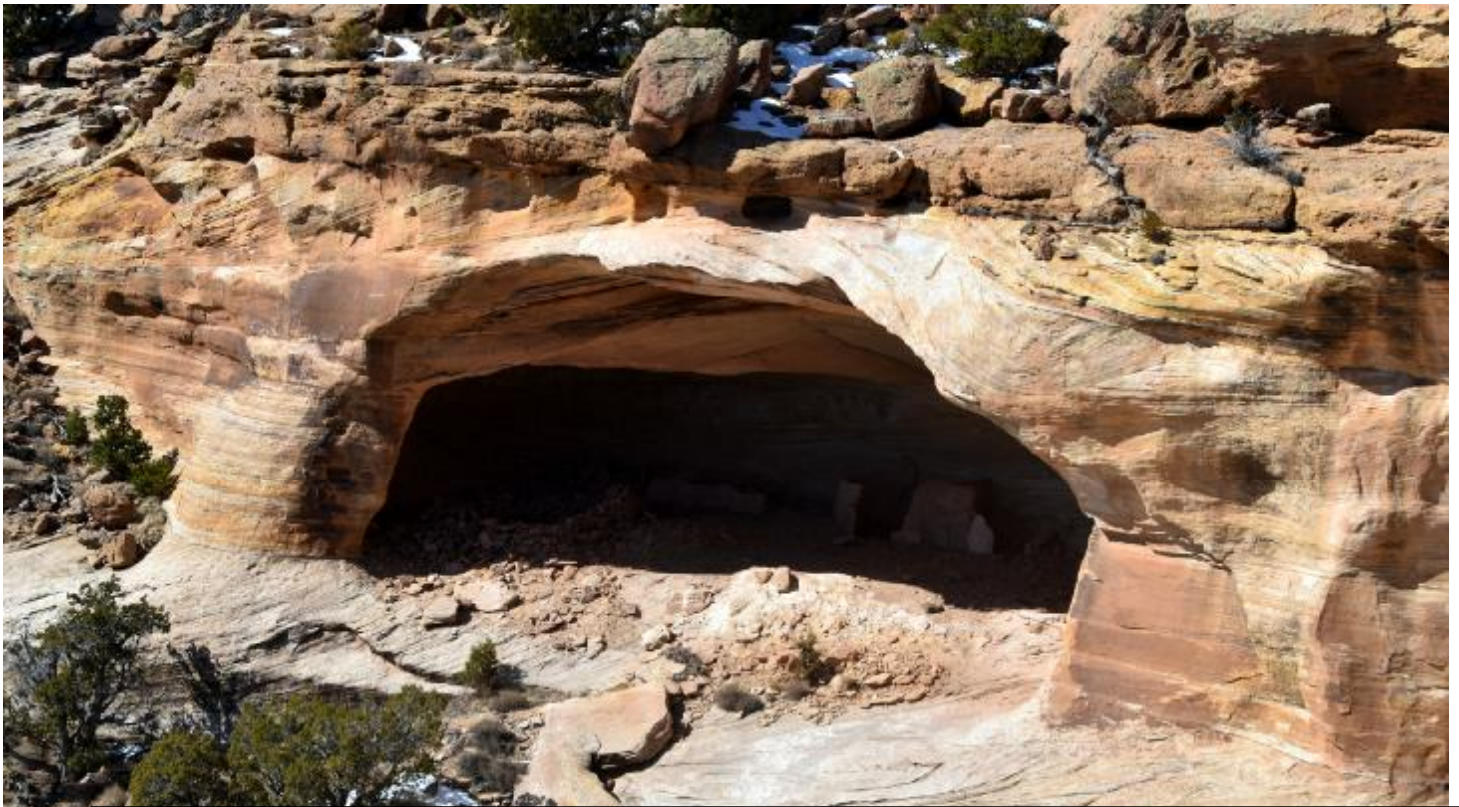




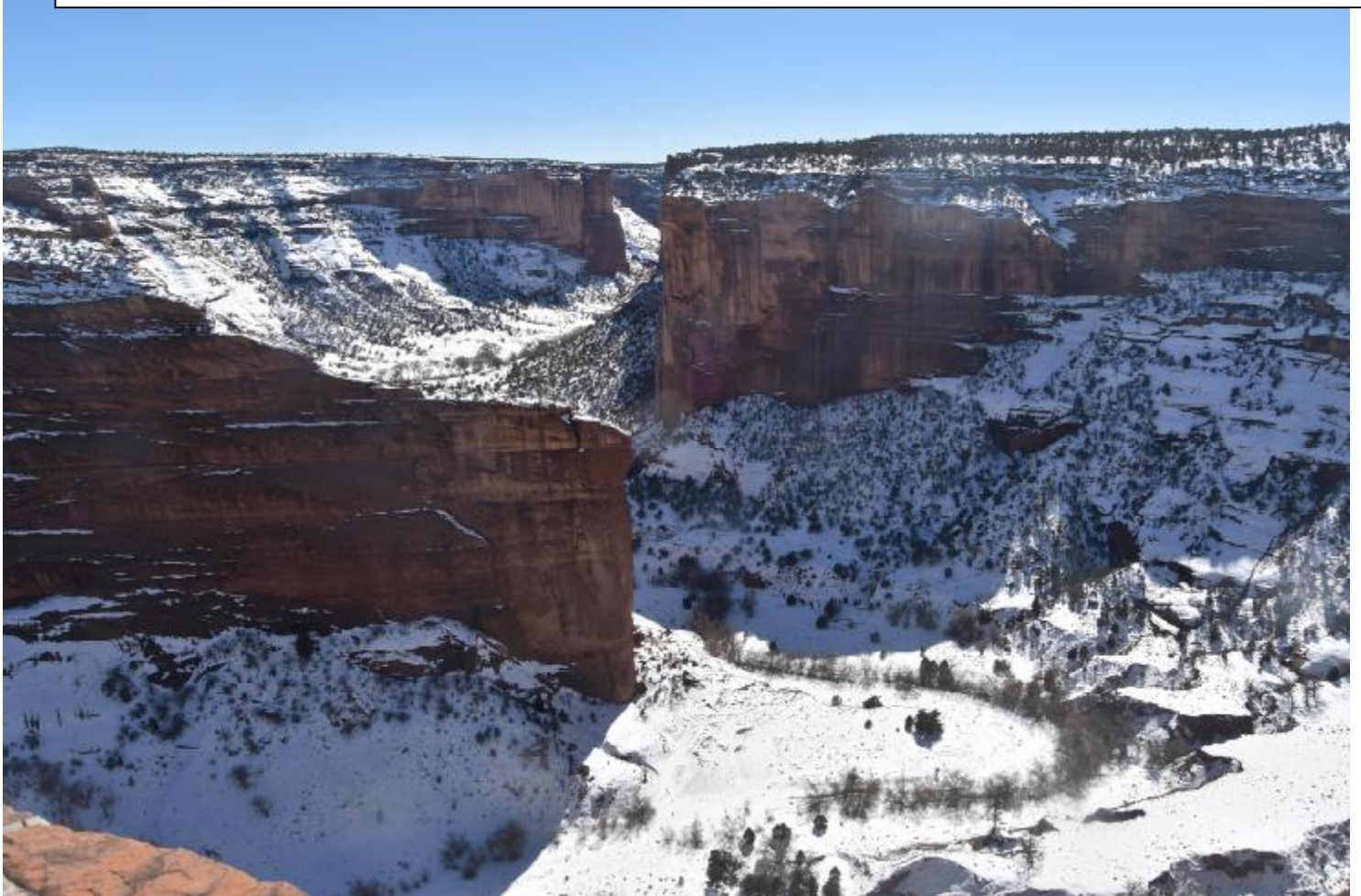
Wait a minute! Just this morning I was wondering when I was going to get rid of those apples that have been in the snack bin for almost two months.







Being that the Canyon belongs to the Navajo, there are no forays into the canyon without a Navajo guide accompanying you, for a price of course. So the average person will never see the inside of these cave ruins, or get up close and personal with the stone ruins, or see sights like "The Window", which is not visible from the north or south rim drives.







The advantage of a winter visit: Peace and quiet. This is one of the few overlooks which did not have an Indian selling jewelry. I think the number one occupation amongst the American Indian is making and selling jewelry to tourists at scenic overlooks, even when there are signs that say 'no vending'.





Straight
down
600
feet
again

Below is the type of cliff I am taking those straight down photos from. No guard rails. One false step on some ice and, GERONIMO!!! Sorry, he's an Apache.







THIS IS THE White House overlook and the trail down to the White House ruins. You can see the trail to the left. Before I got here I had already decided not to do this hike, 1) because of the muddy trail 2) because I never wanted to leave the RV alone too long.





While this couple was on the hike, someone smashed the driver's side window and stole stuff from the back seat.





There were three more overlooks left along the south rim, and since I had grown a little paranoid, I decided to skip to the last one, probably the most impressive, Spider Rock Overlook. Spider Rock is an 800 foot sandstone spire that rises from the canyon floor at the junction of Canyon de Chelly and Monument Canyon. It IS impressive.

I walked to the end of the 200 yard paved path to the overlook. I kept stopping to listen for cars since I was the only one in the parking lot. Just after I took the picture below I heard a car door slam, and looking up that direction I could actually see the RV with a pickup truck parked close by. I snapped a picture, not that it would do much good, too far away, and started quickly back towards the parking lot. I slowed down when I saw a father and son coming towards me on the path, but I felt disappointed that I could not enjoy the view for awhile longer.



I made my way back to the VC to ask the Ranger if they knew anything about Coal Mine Canyon – No, and if the campground had a water station to fill up my empty gallon jugs – Yes. Naturally, the water station was shut off. I drove into Chinle and a grocery store and was deciding what to do next when there was a knock on my window. He needed to get home to New Mexico and was going to hitchhike. Sorry, I am going west (if he had been going west, I would have been going east). How about a couple bucks for this necklace so I can get something to eat? Here's a couple bucks, keep the necklace. I have a dislike for panhandlers. I decided to just get gas and then head towards Navajo National Monument near Kayenta. I pulled into the station behind a car half way between the diesel pumps. I pulled up close, waiting, his vehicle doesn't even use diesel. I had to back up and go around then turn around and pull into the pump on the other side. Eventually he got out and washed his windshield then drove away. I headed north and wound up behind a government vehicle that drove the right hand side white line, and kept slowing from 65 to 45. In the mean time another car passed me, almost forcing the oncoming driver to veer off the road, then after about a mile he stops to make a left turn. Are you kidding me? Why pass me and then stop to turn? This is only a two lane road of course. I finally get to HWY 59 and pull into the left turn lane and guess what, the slowpoke in front of me suddenly veers to the left and turns also. It was another 3-4 miles before I could pass him. Broken into vehicles, paranoia, no water, panhandlers, a totally obtuse and inconsiderate person at the station, an idiot speed demon with no common sense and a s-l-o-w government employee, by now I just want to get the heck off the reservation, literally.



Once I got rid of the @#\$\$% I actually got to enjoy an extremely scenic drive on HWY 59. WOW. All of the following are from a moving vehicle, so they aren't the greatest, but it was very enjoyable.







The setting sun was lighting up the mountains. If I turn north at the junction I will hit Monument Valley, but I have been there before so I turned south.



Above – This rock just stuck up out of the middle of a valley, miles to any other rise. I actually stopped up on the hill and waited for the sun to set and light this baby up. As you can see below, it looks nice, but not the effect I was hoping for.



only had to go another 7 miles south to Kayenta for the night, behind a Burger King. There are semis and another RV here.

have to say I was a little disappointed in Canyon de Chelly. You probably noticed there were no pictures of plaques. That's because there weren't any plaques. Pull into a scenic overlook, no name plaque, no description plaque, hike to the overlook, no plaque telling you where or what to look for. Only that one had a name associated with it that I didn't have to look at the map to figure out. Then, only the map told you what was at that overlook, but all overlooks were not listed. I wonder if there are no plaques because they wind up being stolen. That would make sense. Illogical sense, but sense nonetheless.

There was no geological information at the visitor center. I know a river runs through the valley, but how come the walls are straight up instead of stepped like the Grand Canyon? What kind of rock am I looking at? Why is the valley floor flat and the river so small? How come there's not more debris at the bottom of the valley? And so on.

Of course the bad elements listed earlier also took their toll. I think that's why I enjoyed the HWY 59 drive so much, I didn't have to park and lock up and worry about being out of sight of the RV.

Up on my soapbox, it doesn't happen very often.....

I know American Indians have a bad reputation, and many hate the way they were treated by the white man and rightly so. I have always felt they deserved whatever they could get because of the way the white man took their land and treated them. Now, I did not even have any real interaction with an Indian other than to say maybe to a jewelry seller and "I'm going west" to the panhandler, but I felt as though my visit, which brings money to the tribe, took a backseat to what they could get out of me or in their poor treatment of me. Now, I personally never killed, harmed, degraded, forced onto a reservation, or stole from, an

American Indian, yet I am treated as though I have. Maybe turnabout is fair play but, I'll tell you what, because of the way I was treated and the way I saw other people treated and the way I see (some) American Indians don't want me or my money around, that's what they'll get. Nothing from me, not even my respect, because respect has to be earned. I have never given an American Indian a reason to lose respect for me personally, but I have been given plenty of reasons to lose respect for some American Indians.

Enough. Oh well, one last Navajo site to visit, and I almost decided not to because of wanting to flee the reservation.

I hope you enjoyed the scenery, I sure did.

Until next time.....