



# In Search of Eldorado



## Hello to Family & Friends

As I mentioned last night I parked behind the Burger King with some other vehicles. In the morning I noticed that the Burger King sign also had another large sign attached that told me to visit the Code Talkers display in the lobby, so I did. It was nothing to take pictures of, just some photos from an Indian whose father was a Code Talker during WWII. There was a movie out by the same name I think, or something similar anyways.

The story is about a group of Navajo Indians who developed a code during WWII that allowed them to talk over the radio and the Japanese would not be able to break the code, because the code was based on the Navajo language.

I read about it, but shortly moved on to the Navajo National Monument pictured above. But before we get there, let's enjoy the scenery along the way.

Day 55

Thursday

February 28th

Kayenta  
To  
Marble Canyon

Weather

40's to 60's and Sunny

## Eldorado

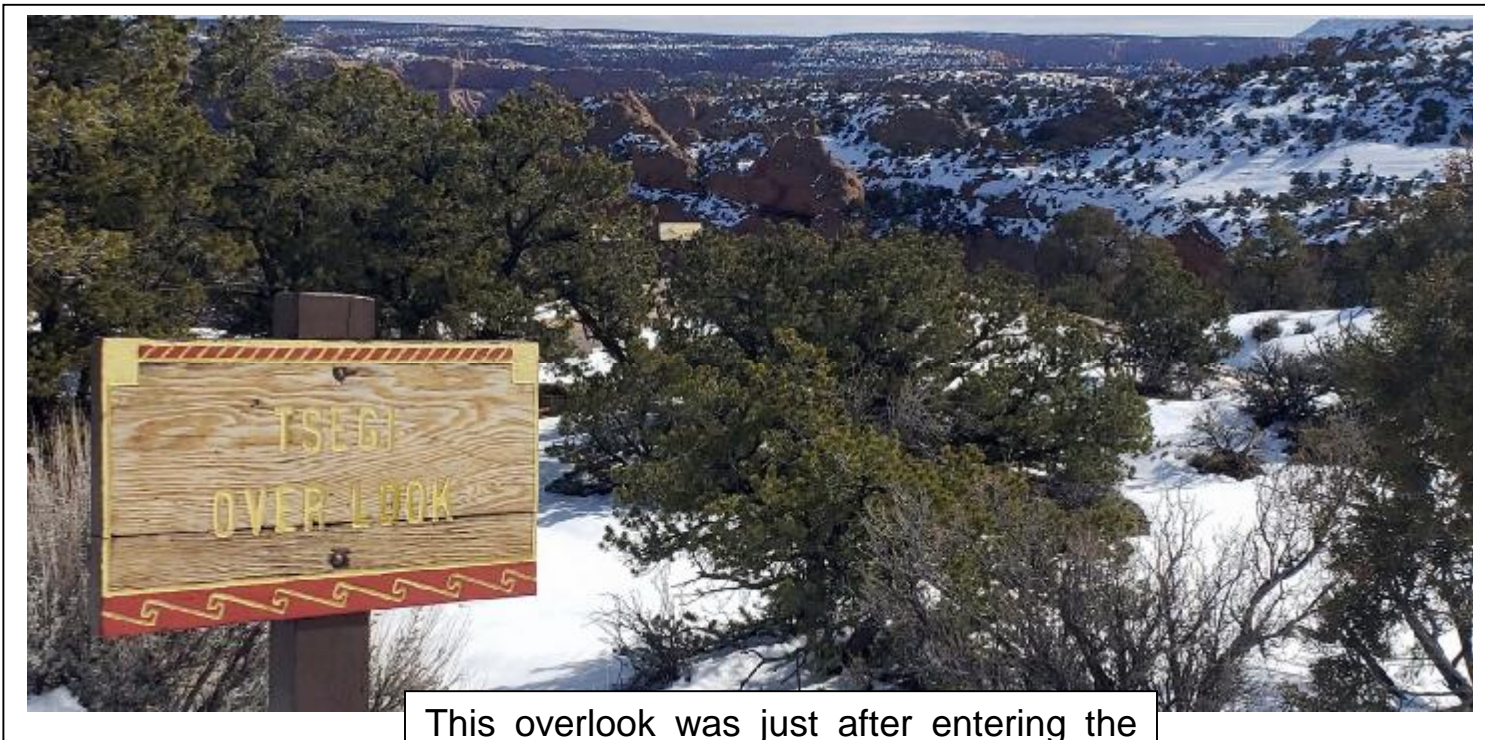
By Edgar Allan Poe

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!'



This overlook was just after entering the park and before reaching the visitor center. The visitor center photo did not turn out. I can imagine your disappointment.



What a gem they have here. It is far from the madding crowd (I've heard that somewhere before) after a nine-mile drive from the main highway, no scenic drive, but this overlook (with the plaque below) was gorgeous. And you were right Steve, no garbage all over the place, and no mud. I think Chinle was muddier than the towns in NORTH TO ALASKA or SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF.

## Canyons in Time

The maze of canyonlands stretching before you is the continuing work of millions of years of powerful and pervasive geological forces.

Water scours and down-cuts channels in the soft sandstone plateau. The process is augmented by forces of frost, plants, and alternating expansion and contraction of the rock due to temperature changes. A gradual uplift of the land further promotes canyon-cutting by increasing the speed and cutting force of water. Flowing water is the "freightline" that will carry the entire canyon landscape to the sea.

They also have three short hiking trails.

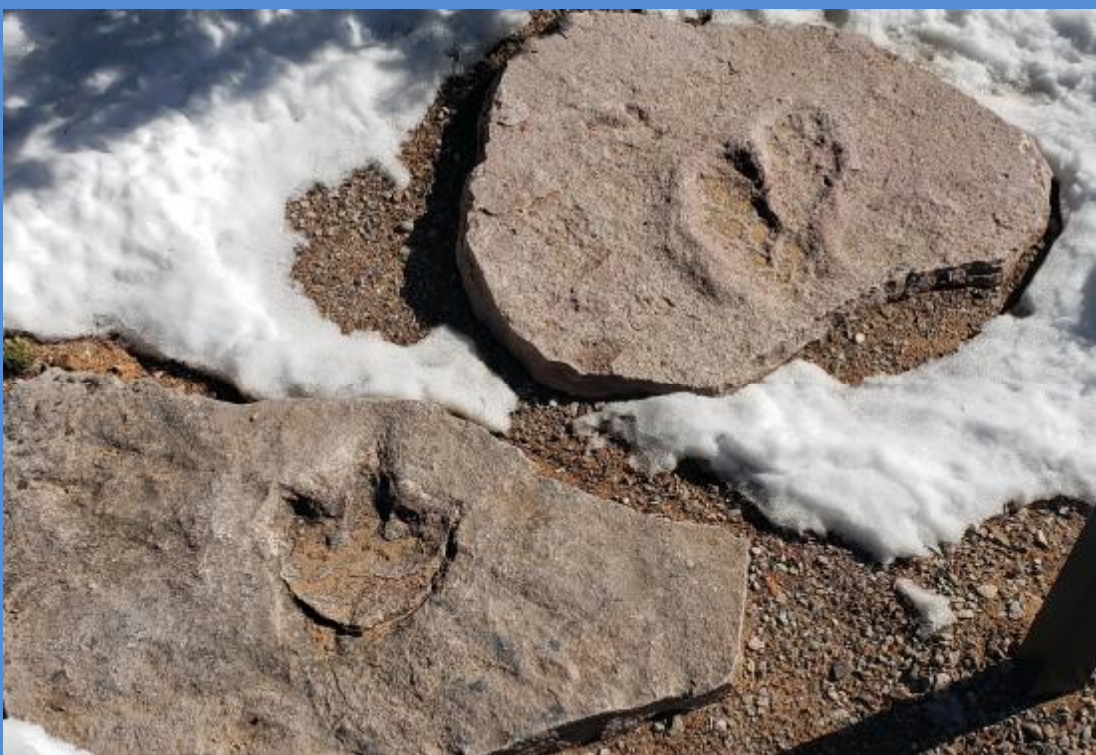
Inside the VC was the display below, a model of the cave dwellings, a movie which was good, and other displays not worth a photo. However, I did ask the Ranger why Canyon de Chelly has no plaques, she replied, rather disdainfully, "I don't know what's going on with de Chelly." I mentioned how muddy it was and left it at that.



On my way to the trailhead I passed these dinosaur footprints.

## DINOSAUR FOOTPRINT

Footprints of a small dinosaur that walked on his hind legs. About 180 million years ago, he left a lasting signature by walking through the mud. The print then filled with sediment, and both print and cast (upside-down here) eventually turned to stone. Tracks of these three-toed Jurassic reptiles are very common in the limestone formations of the Navajo Country.



# Sandal Trail

Follow this easy one-mile (1.6 km) round-trip trail to a point overlooking Betatakin Ruin – multi-level cliff-village home to a community of 13th-century Anasazi farmers.

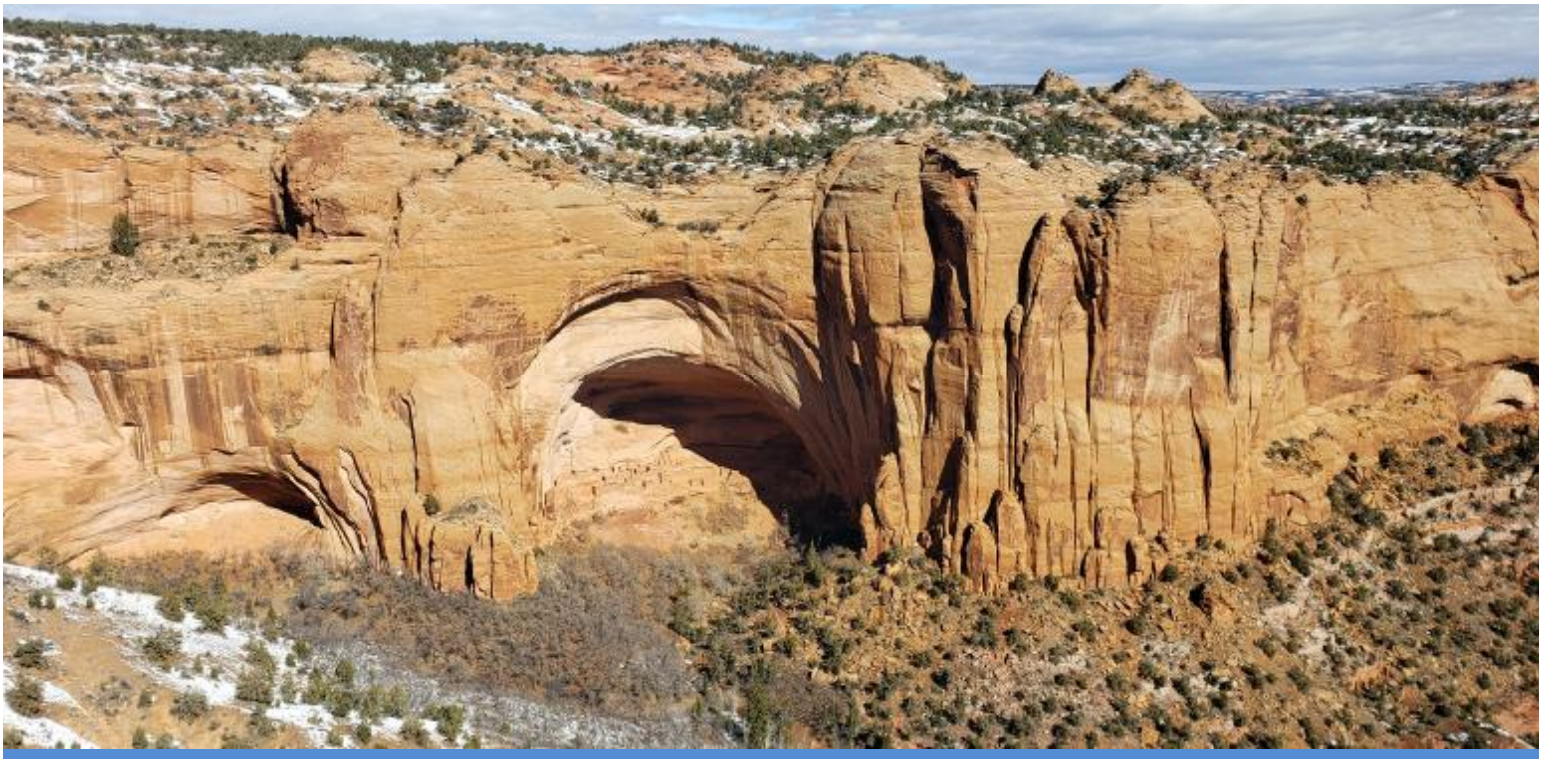
This is the longest trail, but also the one that is the most clear. It's paved the entire way, and only partially snow covered and slippery.



You can just see a young couple around the bend of the path. I caught up and helped them over some icy spots then continued down. I passed their daughter on her way back up. Then on my way back up I ran into the daughter and the gentleman still making their way down. I found out he is 90 years young. The daughter was probably in her 60's. What an inspiration.

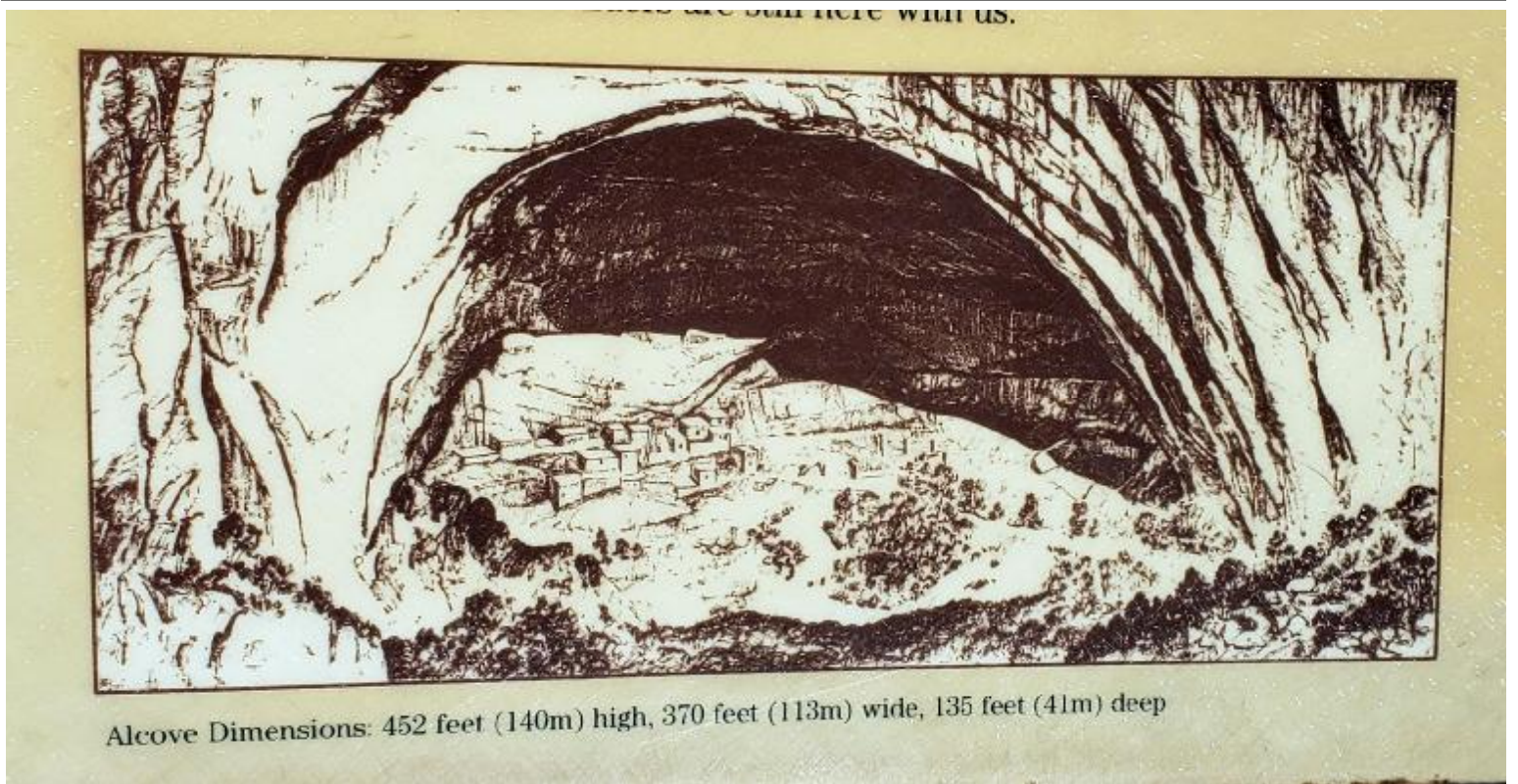


I have never considered myself a snow angel, and had no part in making this one.



Below is a close-up of the ruins inside the alcove.





# Prehistoric Pioneers

## This Is The Place

The Ancestral Puebloans often chose south-facing alcoves like this one for their cliff villages; here are all the basic necessities of life. Benefits of winter sun and summer shade, shelter from the elements, and springwater for drinking and cooking are inside. Nearby are animals to hunt, plants to gather, and open streamside lands to farm.







This is the Betatakin Canyon and it sure is beautiful. Too bad they don't allow horseback riding any longer.

Navajo National Monument protects the Betatakin ruins shown above; Inscription House, occupied from about 1250-1300 and constructed of adobe bricks rather than the stone used above. It is closed to the public due to its unstable and fragile condition; and Keet Seel, the largest village in the Monument and best preserved in the entire southwest. It was first occupied in 950 and by 1272 as many as 150 people lived there. By 1300 drought had driven them all away, but before departing, they sealed the entryways of many rooms which contained pottery jars filled with corn. Were they planning to come back someday? The trail to Keet Seel drops 1000 feet to the canyon floor, crosses streams (no bridges) and is 17 miles round trip. A permit is required and only twenty people are allowed per day. They get directions and meet a Ranger at the site for a guided tour.

I wanted to do the short but steep Canyon View Trail, but the snow was a foot deep and there were no other footprints, so even the Rangers hadn't been down that way.

## Sweathouse

This miniature forked-stick hogan without a smoke hole is actually a highly effective bath – an ancient solution to the problem of keeping clean in a land where water is scarce.

Here's how it works: Stones are heated in a fire, then rolled in, or carried in on a wooden fork. The bathers undress outside, and then crawl inside. A blanket is hung over the door opening. Now all it takes is patience while the radiant heat does its work. This is the time for relaxing tired muscles – conversing – and perhaps singing sweathouse songs. Afterward, the bathers emerge from the sweathouse to rinse off with water, if any is available, or to rub dry with the soft, absorbent sand of Navajo country.



## Hogan

The Navajo Indians resourcefully met the demands of desert dwelling when they came up with this comfortable and sturdy forked-stick hogan – so called because its chief structural support is made up of three poles with their forked ends interlocked at the top.

You'll rarely see any of these old-style hogans in your travels around the Navajo Reservation today. Look instead for modern multi-sided log hogans and earth-covered hogans – and, more and more popular all the time, mobile homes and rectangular frame houses. But no matter how modern the dwelling, you'll usually find a hogan of some sort nearby: Navajo tradition dictates that important curing ceremonies can't be held anywhere else.





I wish there was more here to see. I enjoyed Navajo National Monument much more than Canyon de Chelly. I would like to return and visit this one again sometime.

I headed south on 160 towards Tuba City. I wanted to see if I could get a glimpse of Coal Mine Canyon, Blue Canyon and Ha Ho No Geh Canyon. These are deep in Navajo territory and seldom seen by the white man. You need a permit and a guide to hike into the canyons, but I was just hoping to get a glimpse from the road. A little more research found it was a nineteen mile dirt & gravel road to even get close, high clearance and 4WD recommended. So I turned around and took Indian Route 21 and HWY 98 into Page. The scenery along the way was not quite as nice as yesterday, but not bad.





Next stop is the Glen Canyon NRA and the Glen Canyon Dam which created Lake Powell. I stopped at Antelope Canyon, but all the tours were booked.



Lake Powell



Glen Canyon Dam

The vehicle bridge across the gorge





And the gorge below the dam



You can probably tell that I am somewhat of an architectural geek. I was fascinated by the way the VC supports are anchored into the solid rock.

I took a short drive north to the Wahweap Scenic Overlook for the pictures below



That's the Wahweap Marina about 5 miles away



I spoke to a pretty Ranger at the visitor center about some possible hiking in the area, but it was getting late and I would not have had time to enjoy it. I headed south to a scenic overlook of the dam. It was fun scrambling over the layers of sandstone here.







Good enough view for a selfie

Next up is Horseshoe Bend, oddly enough, it's a bend in the Colorado River shaped like a horseshoe. Obviously the sun was not at a good angle this time of day.





I moved around to the south and found a better spot. Not a great picture, but not bad. I don't think it was as good as the Goosenecks in Utah, but there I was camped twenty feet from the cliff edge, and I was all alone with the stars so bright you could read by their light.

I thought it was just a hike to the top of the hill, but once up there I realized it's a one-mile round trip hike to the overlook. Do the Japanese drive on the left over there? I could swear about 95% of the hikers, and there were over a hundred, were Japanese. As I approached the RV I noticed a car parked right in front of me, the man standing in front of the car telling the woman where to park. At least I assume that's what he was doing since I don't speak Japanese, but his hand signals indicated I was right. I walked around the RV to the passenger side and unlocked the door to put some garbage in the basket, walked around to the driver's side, got in, settled the phone in its bracket, put on my seat belt, adjusted the armrest, started the engine, and she was still sitting in the same spot and he was still waving his arms telling her where to park. He gave me a look and must have told her she had to move. My chauvinistic thought was 'why are you letting her drive in the first place?' No comments please. She finally did move ahead and I pulled out behind a tour bus. The tour bus had to wait for two cars to back up that had pulled wide enough (the left lane) that the bus could not get by. It was rather funny. But I continued south as the sun set.





The road ahead



The same gap from the other side





At the bottom of this mountain I turned right to head towards Vermilion Cliffs and Pipe Spring National Monuments. There were no clouds for a decent sunset shot, but the sun did light up the mountain very nicely.



I stopped in the little town, make that bump in the road, called Marble Canyon. It was just on the verge of dusk and I did not want to keep on going and miss all of the great scenery along the drive. This is supposed to be one of the best in Arizona. The guy at the gas station told me it was ok to park just the other side of the bridge in the Navajo Interpretive Market parking lot for the night.

It's extremely dark and kind of remote, although the gas station and Motel are just a half-mile or so away. I didn't open the slide-out right away, that definitely makes it look like an overnighiter. I ate dinner and started on this newsletter. About 9:30 I heard another vehicle in the lot, fortunately its gravel and noisy, then a car door slammed. I waited for the knock on the door and an officer of the law telling me to move along, but it never came. There was some more door slamming, the sound of someone walking around, and after about 35 minutes the engine started and I glanced out to see a pickup truck pulling out. Kind of strange. Made sure the bike was still on the rack and came inside to finish. Don't worry, the girls already know exactly where I am.

The Arizona portion of my trip is nearing its end. Next week I will be heading to Houston and a visit with Morgan & Matt. I should finally get some golf in while there, the rodeo, Santana, maybe go see ANASTASIA, and possibly a weekend in Galveston, so there will be newsletters, but they may be a little erratic.

But I'm still here, and there is a lot of scenery to see yet; Vermilion Cliffs, Pipe Spring, Grand Canyon, Walnut Canyon, Montezuma's Castle, the list goes on. I guess I'll have to make another winter trip down here to see the rest, darn.

Until next time.....