



In Search of Eldorado



Hello to Family & Friends

Last night I told you about the middle of the lollipop and the missing plaques, here are four of the five. Maybe they should also put a security camera here. More of our tax dollars at work.

The four photos below are of where I spent the night and the remoteness of the spot. West for 10 miles to the mountains, South for 20 miles to the mountains, East for 20 miles to the mountains and North 2+ miles to the Vermilion Cliffs. No buildings in sight.



Day 57

Saturday

March 2nd

Middle of Nowhere

To

Marble Canyon

Weather

50's and 60's Clouds, sun and rain

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 am going to try Soap Creek Canyon. The description says it will become more like mountain climbing, and less like hiking, before you reach the Colorado River



The trail starts out as a wash but cuts deeper and deeper into the ground the nearer the river gets.
Below – this rock must have overbalanced the small remaining ground beneath it and finally collapsed.

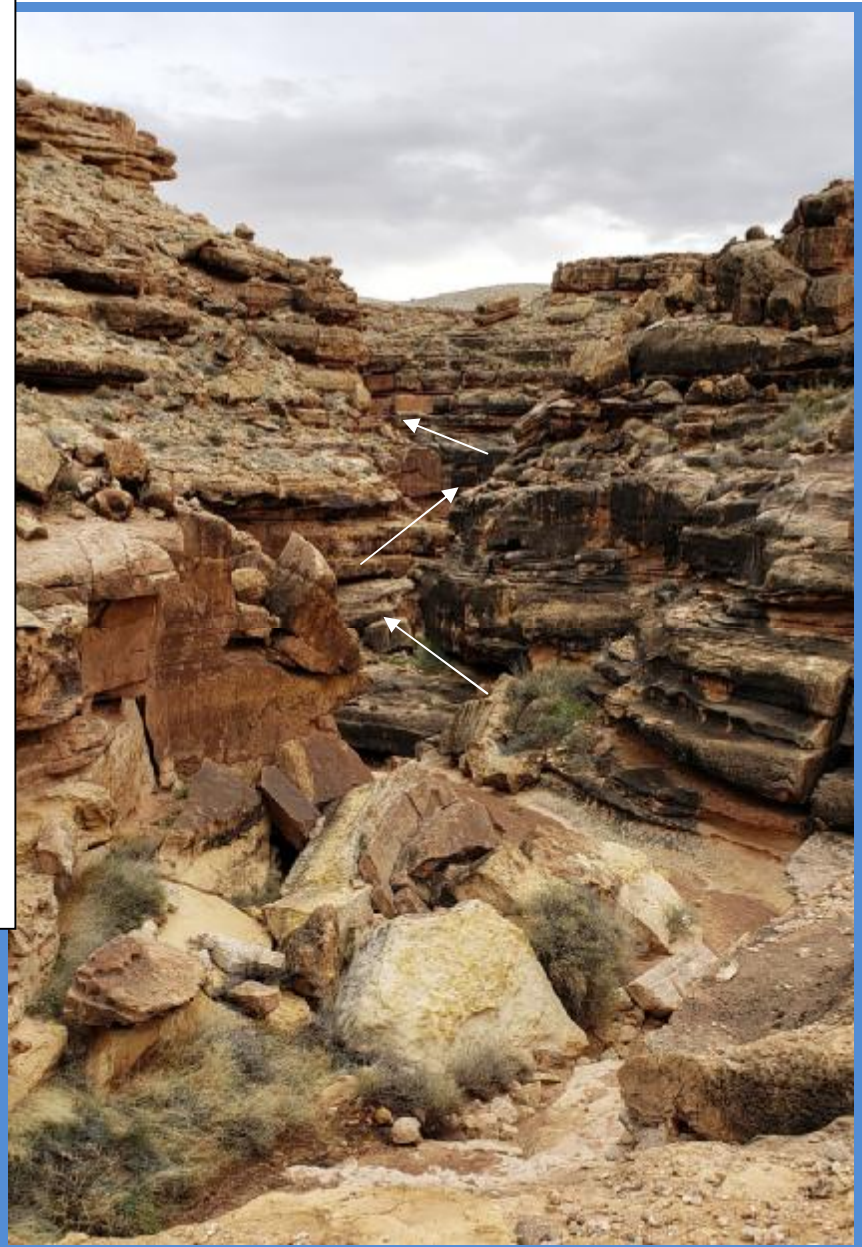




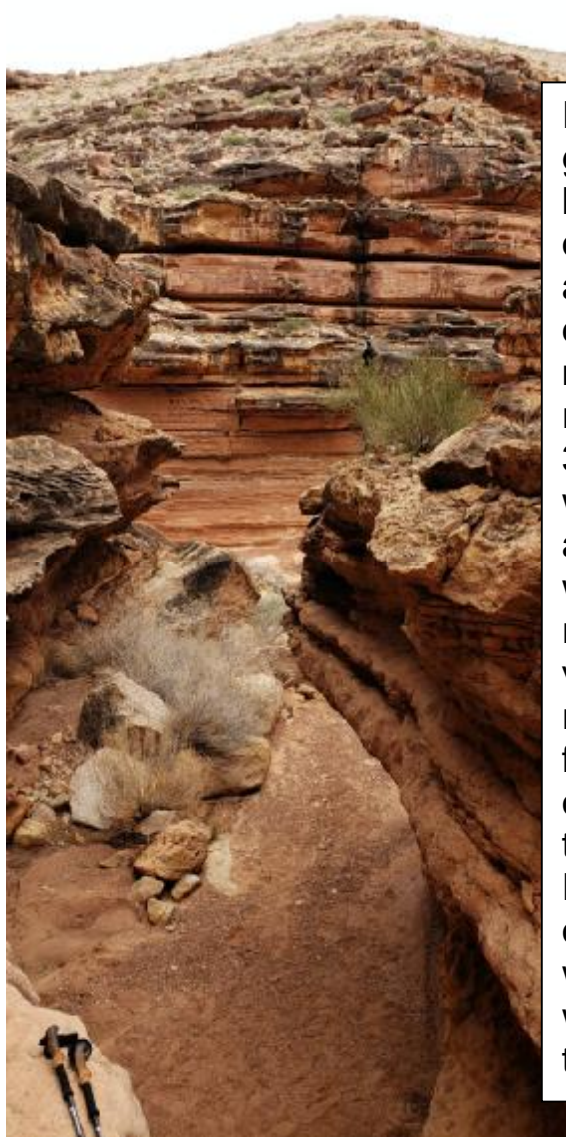
The sides are getting higher. There is a chance of rain today, so I'm keeping my ears open for the sound of a flash flood, and keep my eyes searching for an escape route if needed.

Can you see the path ahead? But going down instead of up.

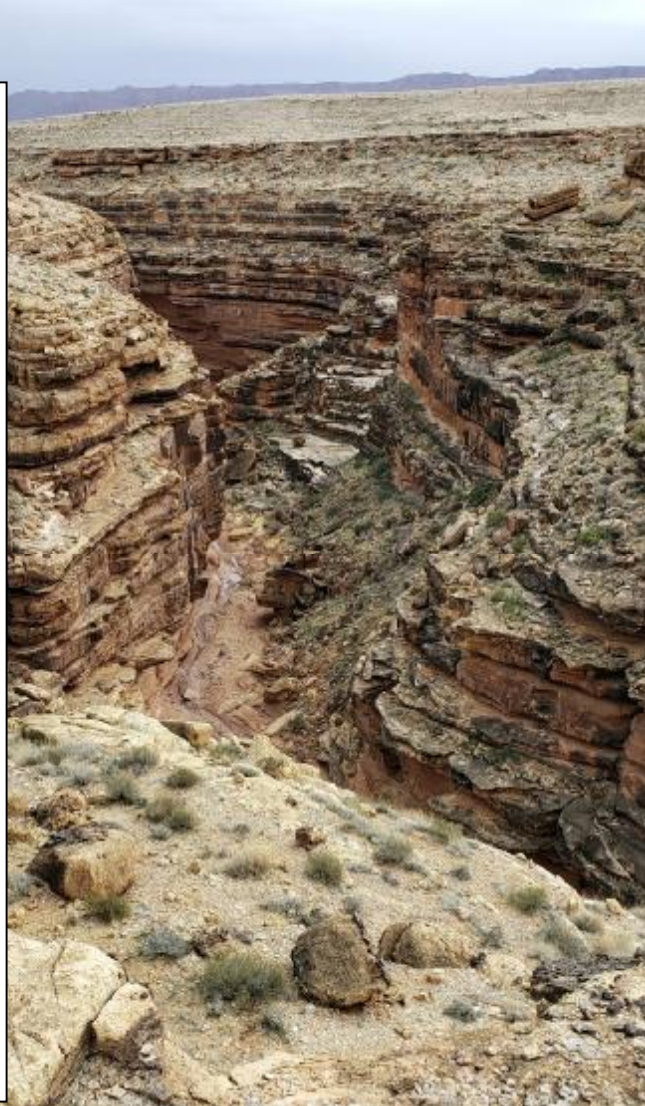
I love hiking canyons. There is really no chance of getting lost; you can start going uphill which makes the return all downhill; there is scrambling and bouldering; there is no set route, there may be a cairn here or there for direction, but you pick your own trail.



Drat! Stymied! I mentioned I like bouldering and scrambling, but I don't really enjoy rock climbing anymore. It's hard to tell but that's at least a ten-foot drop to the sand. I debated jumping because it is sand, but even with the amount of milk I drink I could still break a bone. I tried reaching that shelf about half way down, but didn't feel comfortable. Oh well, I knew at the start I might end up on the ridge rather than in the canyon.



If I could have gotten down, left is the view of the trail ahead. The trail description mentioned ropes and 15-30 foot drops. I will quit here and make my way to the ridge. Right is a view from the ridge. It was fun making my own trail out of the canyon. Possibly no one has ever walked before where I did today.



Another view from the ridge top



The canyon above is actually kind of parallel to the one I started down. Like the smart guy I am I climbed the ridge between the canyons about 100 yards before they came to a junction, so my only direction was back.



Again, it was fun making my own trail across the open spaces with only the sight of the RV as my goal. Can you see it? It was actually a good thing I could not follow the ridge to the river, as soon as I started the engine, the rain drops started also. What can I say, perfect timing.

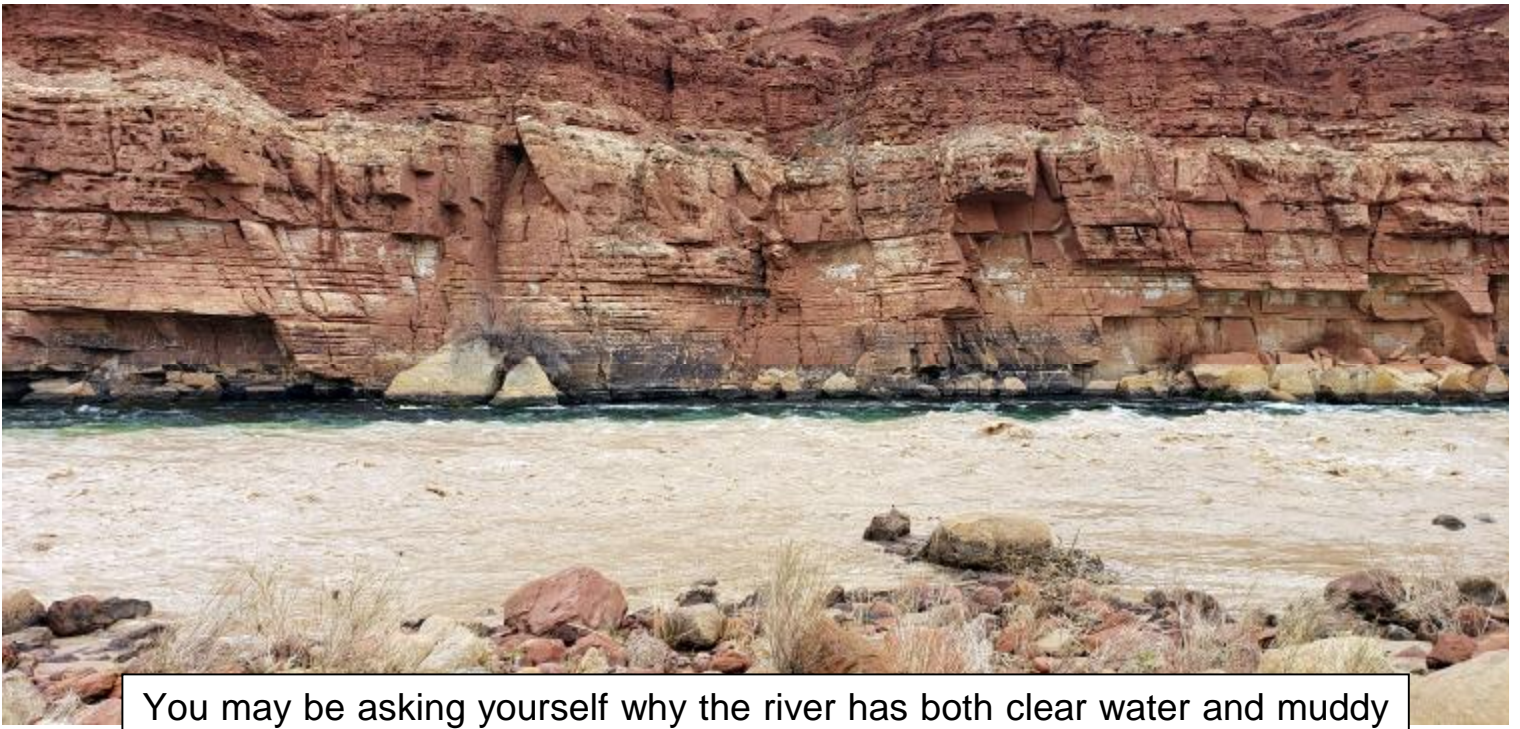
My next stop is Lee's Ferry. This is just five miles north of Marble Canyon and was recommended by the BLM guy for hiking.



Paria Beach at the Colorado River



My lunchtime view



You may be asking yourself why the river has both clear water and muddy water? This is called the Paria Riffle. Not enough to be called rapids they are called riffles. This happens when another river or stream joins the Colorado. The smaller stream brings the silt and debris into the Colorado creating a riffle. If there is enough debris to make the river speed up considerably it becomes rapids. All rapids along the Colorado are formed by the confluence of another body of water.



This is the Paria River

Before Glen Canyon Dam blocked the river above Lees Ferry, all Grand Canyon river trips either began here or stopped here on their downstream run. For those starting upstream, Lees Ferry was a rest and repair stop, supply point, or in some cases a place of decision: "Do we continue or not?" Beyond here, for more than 200 miles, there is no easy way into or out of Grand Canyon.

Preparing for a river trip. All the participants were eating lunch on the boat so I couldn't get out there to talk to anyone, but I thought I heard it was a 25 day trip. I asked a Ranger who had never heard of a 25 day trip either.



I still would like to do this someday





This sounded like an interesting hike. Unfortunately, it started to rain a little and the wind really picked up. I'm glad I had my waterproof Blue Ridge Mountain rain jacket on, I stayed dry. As the sign below says, I did find the steamboat and some ruins, but I could find no cable, and I think I went more than the three-quarters of a mile. But the rain stopped, the sun came out and I made it back to the RV.

Follow the route of the historic "Arizona Road"; the River Trail starts at this sign and passes the Lees Ferry Fort and other stone buildings ahead of you. From the large steel boiler you will see on the ridge, continue on the trail to an overlook above the remains of the steamboat *Charles H. Spencer*. The trail ends at the Upper Ferry Site, three quarters of a mile from here. It is a quiet spot with building ruins and remains of the cable that held the ferry from 1898 to 1928.

**Charles H. Spencer
Steamboat**
This historic resource
is very fragile.
Please Stay Off

You can't really see anything worthwhile



The money shot of the day, maybe.



I can't decide which one is better, can you?



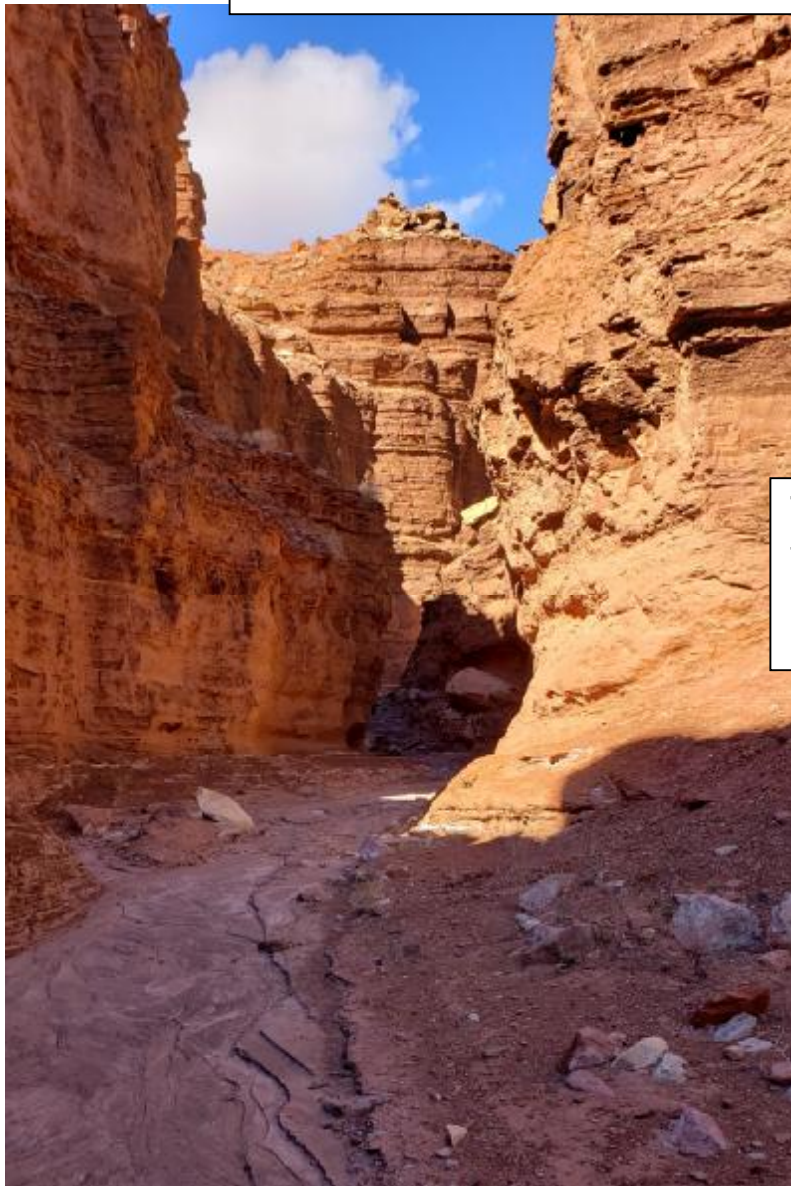


I didn't realize there was an Upper and Lower trail, but I decided on the upper since the return would be downhill and I had already hiked about five miles today.

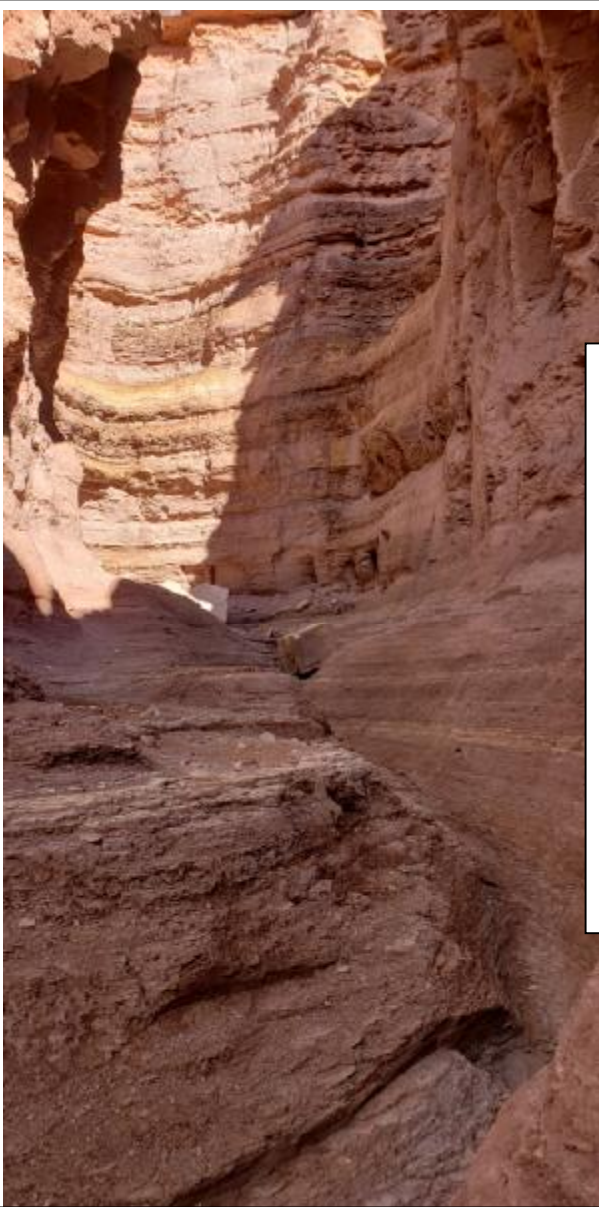




I came to a fork in the wash. A cairn directed me to the left and there were no footprints going up the right fork. I went to the right.



This was a great path to take. The walls closed in quickly and became much steeper.



Too bad it was a dead end, at least for me. After about a quarter-mile it just went about sixty-feet straight up.

I made my way back to the main junction and followed the cairn to the left which still seemed to be the main wash.

I passed another fork but stayed with what seemed to be the wider of the two.

The walls grew steeper again, maybe one-hundred-feet in the photo below.





Holy Cow! That's not just a rock fall, that's a dam. It fills the wash from side to side, about fifty-feet, and stands about twenty-feet high. It looks like I can get to the top. I wonder if there's a lake behind it.



Well it's not a lake, but there is standing water. I followed some footprints along the edge, but all I found was a 15 foot drop to the mud filled wash. Looks like another dead-end. Back to the last junction.

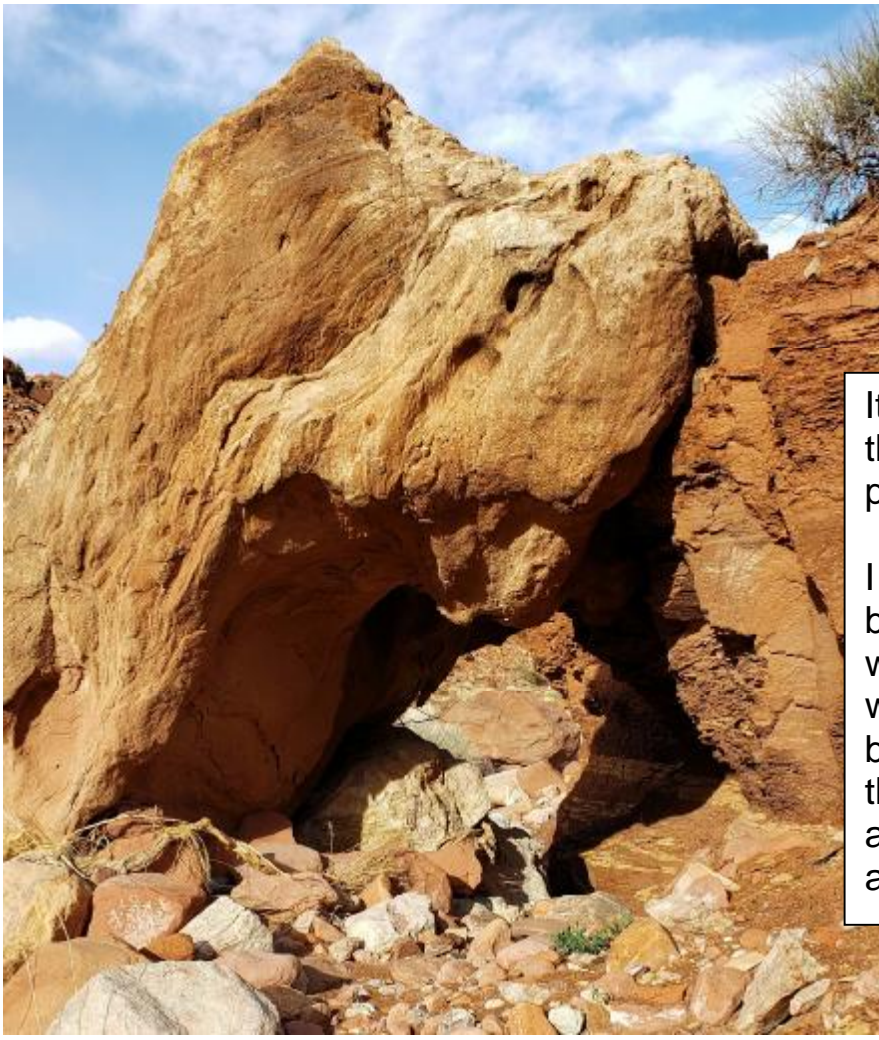


The story goes that, a million years or so ago an alien flying saucer landed here and was covered by a sudden dust storm.



This is fantastic. I love hiking canyons. Did I tell you that already? Pick my own trail to follow.

You can't really tell, but my footprint to the right is about eight inches deep. Oops. It felt like quicksand.



It's hard to tell in the photo, but there's a tunnel through there, just past the shadows it opens up again.

I hiked for another thirty minutes before turning around, just when it was starting to get interesting, but I wanted to make sure I made it back before dark. As it turned out, with the wind at my back, a strong wind, and going downhill, it only took me another thirty minutes.



I leave you with this rather odd sunset over the Vermilion Cliffs. Storm clouds were rolling in. I waited to see if the sun lit up the lower clouds, but it never did.

Since I'd put in a good seven miles today, maybe more, I decided to treat myself to dinner out (I also don't have anything for dinner in the fridge). Just down the road is Marble Canyon again and the Marble Canyon Lodge and Restaurant.

Chopped steak, mashed potatoes, salad and steamed asparagus. The steak was a little dry and overcooked, potato was ok, salad had no flavor oddly enough, and the steamed asparagus was like mush. I would have been better off with a PB&J sandwich. I don't understand, since I was the only customer in the place, how the chef (Ha) could overcook a meal when he only has one to prepare. It's not like he's rushing from one thing to another.

Because I was at Marble Canyon I decided to stay next to the Navajo Bridge again. Feels a lot better this time since another camper pulled in next to me.

It has been raining for the past hour or so and the wind has been rocking the RV something fierce. I don't usually bother with the stabilizers when I boondock, it would hamper a quick getaway if need be.

I think I will try the Lower Cathedral Wash in the morning. It should be safe enough by then since the rain is supposed to end by midnight.

Until next time.....