



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

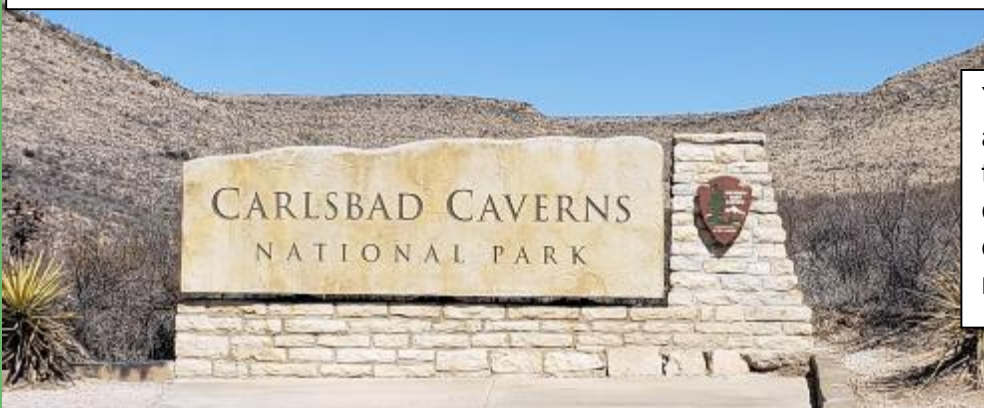
Wednesday, March 17th 2021 Day 59



This is the BLM land we spent the night on. They actually call it a campground. Below – It is just a ‘choose your spot’ type environment. We pulled in about 12:45 a.m. and had a decent sleep.



Pancakes and sausage for breakfast, clean things up, and head off to Guadalupe NP to gather information. Oh boy did we gather information. It just happens to be spring break week. The visitor lot is full, the overflow lot is full, the trailhead parking for the summit is full. The best we can hope for is to arrive early, I mean before 7 a.m., and we might get a spot. We did get a brochure and map. Off we go to Carlsbad Caverns.



You can't see it, but there is another sign, handwritten, just off to the left telling everyone that cave tickets are sold out for the day. Looks like our schedule may need some rearranging.



It's a seven mile drive from the entrance to the VC up a winding road, as you can see above. The parking lots were filling up with hundreds of cars and RV's.



Left – Morgan now has another NP sign photo for her collection.

The Ranger story – People are starting the ticket line around 4 a.m. By 7:00 there are a thousand people in line and the doors open at 8. Only 1000 are allowed in per day. So we took a walk around the VC, decided on a hike and turned onto the Reef Top Circle Scenic Drive. The sign says no Motorhomes. What sign? I didn't see any sign, did you Morgan?

Most of the world's caves form in limestone and other rock that is dissolved by acidic water. Limestone caves generally form via **carbonic acid**, created when surface water reacts with carbon dioxide in the air and soil. Carbonic acid slowly dissolves passageways as it migrates **down** to the water table through cracks in the rock.

Many features in the caves of the Guadalupe Mountains—massive gypsum deposits, large rooms with minimal rock debris, and no stream exits—cannot be explained by this process. To explain these differences, cave scientists have been developing new theories that involve **sulfuric acid**. This acid is created when hydrogen sulfide gas migrates **up** through cracks in the rock from below the water table, and reacts with oxygen at the top of the water table.

Rattlesnake Canyon

The Rattlesnake Canyon Trail descends immediately into a steep canyon, quickly taking hikers into wilderness. The canyon is a great representative of the views and challenges the park's backcountry offers. At a junction, the trail splits and provides opportunities for hikers to travel north toward the mountains and the Guadalupe Ridge Trail or south to the park boundary and basin.

This one starts down into the canyon right away. Unfortunately, it means climbing out of the canyon after 4.36 miles.

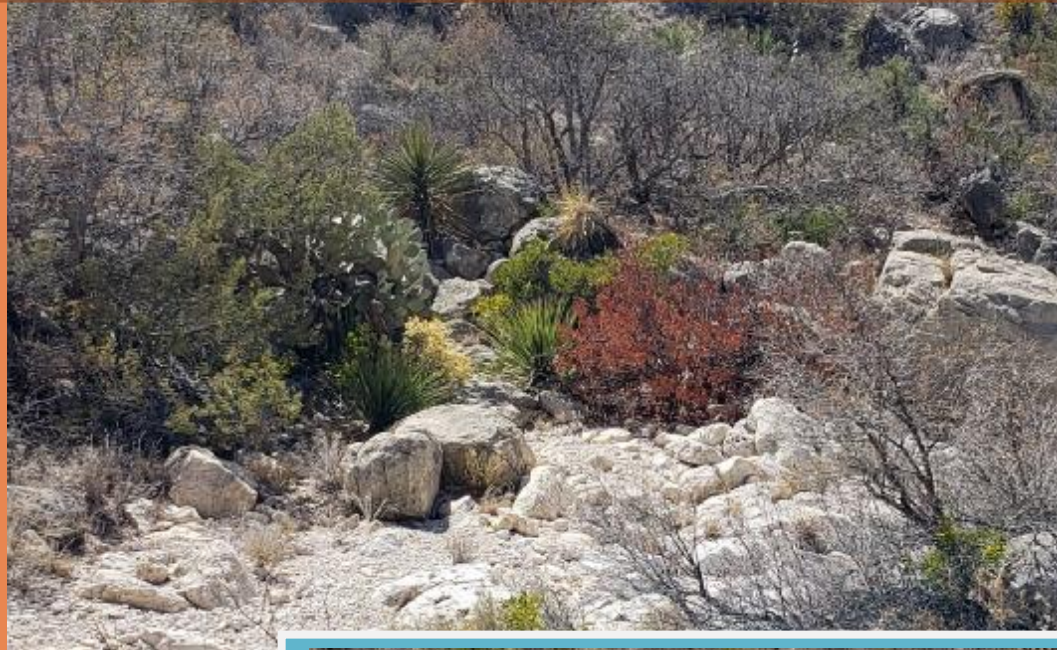
I switched to shorts and a T-shirt as the temp hit 70. Water, Gatorade, snacks, and we're on our way.

I forgot to mention the winds last night. Fortunately, they were pushing us along for a good portion of our drive. There were times I was going 80 and did not have my foot on the gas pedal, and we weren't going downhill. According to the App, gusts of 80 mph were possible. I put down the stabilizer jacks this time and they helped considerably, very little rocking motion. But the slide awning still made a lot of noise and just the noise of the wind across the roof was loud, but we were both able to sleep.





I promised you more scenic pictures, and here you go.



This is one of the few times I saw this combination of colors, red, yellow and green altogether, contrasting with the stark white of the rocks.

They certainly have plenty of ammunition for the trail cairns, and sometimes they get a little carried away. This was by no means the most elaborate one we passed.



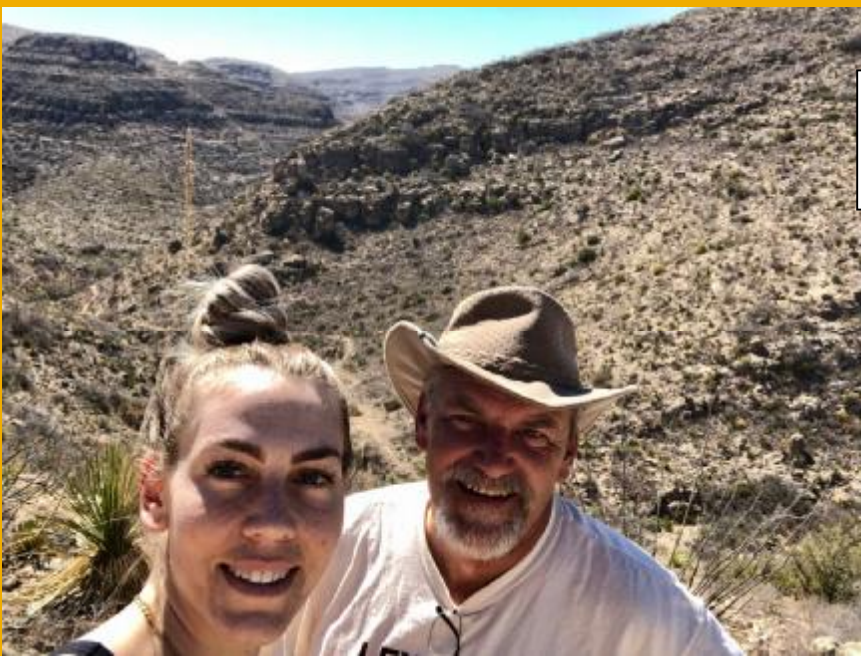
This concrete, wash basin I think, right out here in the middle of nowhere. Not sure what it was used for, but...

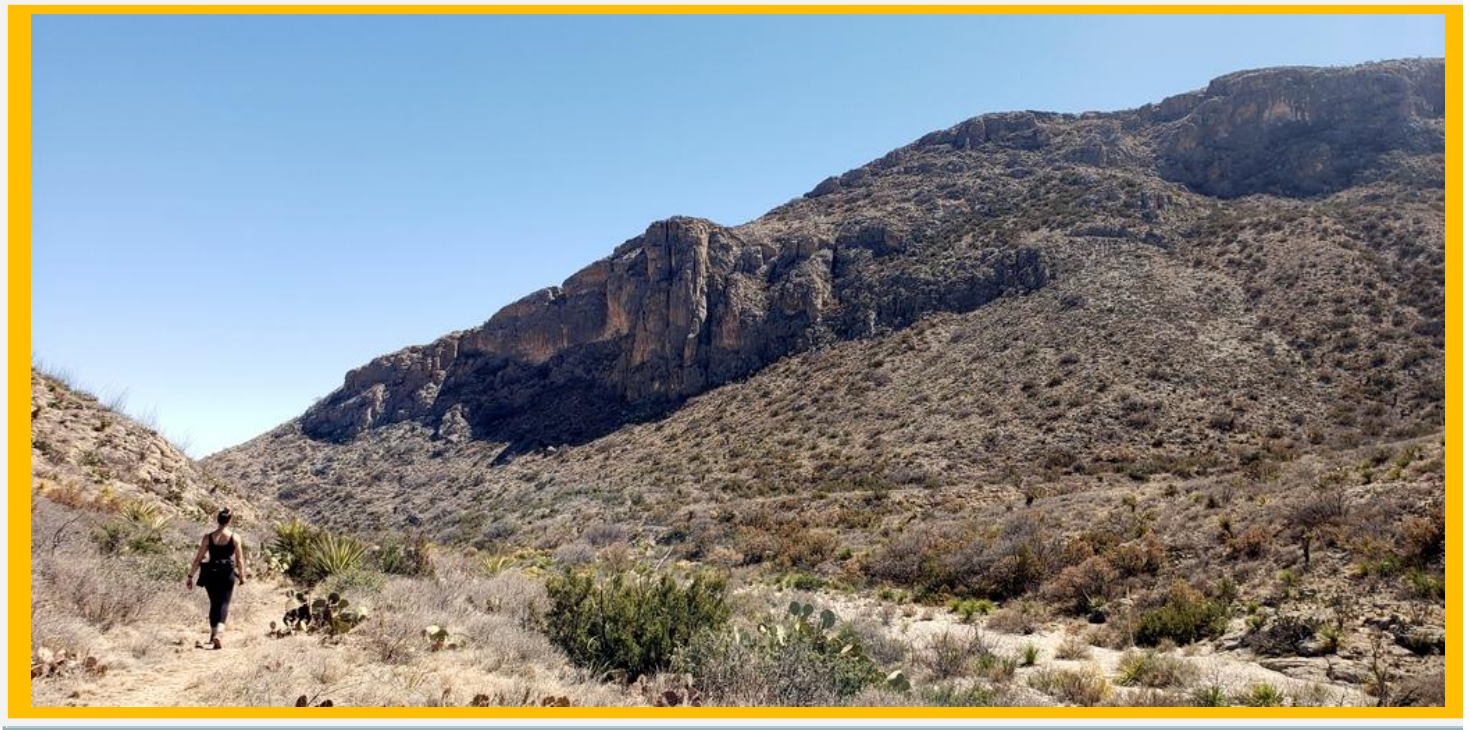


....those are some kind of rusty wash heads, like a shower head. Where they took the water from is anyone's guess



Morgan takes an usie. This was just after we finished the first hard climb on our way back.





Chicken on the Barbie.



Above – Good food and good company.

Our plan has altered that, since we are already in Carlsbad, and have to be in line around 6 a.m., that we will stay here, just outside the park until around 2 a.m., then move to the VC lot and wait until six to get in line. Hopefully get tickets for mid-morning, get a little more sleep, see the caverns, then try to get a spot at Pine Springs Campground in Guadalupe. We would save an additional two miles of hiking. Not sure I could handle 11 miles.

New Mexico is a new state for Morgan to add, bringing her total to 43 of 50. I have been to New Mexico several times, but both Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe are new parks for me.

So far tonight the winds are very slight. No more wind advisories. I'm not sure where the wind decided to go, but I'm glad it's not here.

Hopefully, this trip will not be a bust as far as why we came here. I would hate to go away without summiting Guadalupe Peak and seeing the Caverns. I'm not sure when I will be this direction again.

Wish us luck!

Until next time.....