



Tony Luciano



I'm a Harrisburg area native. Grew up in the Colonial Park and West Hanover areas. Was in the Navy in my early 20's for four years. Boot Camp in Great lakes IL, Navy schools near Orlando FL and was assigned duty in Subic Bay Philippines and Charleston SC. All of those locations and experiences were eye-opening for me at the time.

Except for peering out the window of a jet I had no experience with the American West until 2012. And like so many do, I fell in love with it right away. I've been back a few times and plan more visits in the future.

My last visit was this past spring for almost the first half of June with my love, Susanna just before it hit national news about the heat wave that would engulf the areas that we traveled. Luckily for us we missed the worst of it, but we did experience 106 degrees on the day we were in the Arches National Park. Wew!

We mostly did a whirlwind tour of scenic drives, hiking, and barbecue & beer experiences through Denver, Moab, Caineville (no barbecue & beer there - google map it - you'll see), Page, Mexican Hat, Durango, Silverton and Montrose. We visited so many amazing landscapes: Dead Horse point, Bryce Canyon, Boulder Mountain, Escalante basin, Antelope Canyon, Mesa Verde, and others. We took thousands of pictures, but you know what? Pictures absolutely cannot convey what it is like .. to actually be there in those places ... those landscapes. I love and don't plan leaving our lush, calm, four-season environment of central PA. But if you've ever been to these western places, it is impossible to deny the feel and beauty and amazing variety of them. Often harsh, but incredibly beautiful. One down-side though; they don't usually have a ready supply of water like we do, and that is clearly getting worse. Seeing the old waterline "Tub Ring" of Lake Powel makes things pretty obvious out there. So visiting is great, but I'm not moving there.

The real highlight of our trip was to meet up with some of Susanna's family and friends in North Rim AZ for a three day "Rim to Rim" hike through the Grand Canyon, North-to-South.

Our group in the pictures is me, Susanna, her son Andrew and our friend Kevin. We started hiking down from the Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Kaibab Trail to Bright Angel Creek (a tributary to the Colorado River) and followed along that creek to Phantom Ranch near the river to stay for a day. This is an arduous hike and the Park Rangers provide rules for safety. One being to be with at least one hiking partner. I have to mention that the Park Rangers, mule drivers and all the other personnel were all fantastic caring people!

Phantom Ranch is a cluster of Lodges, camping area, and barn for the mules. The mules are the only way to get anything in and out of the canyon. They pack in supplies... and pack out the trash. There are no vehicles of any sort in the canyon. You are either walking, or you're on a mule. Dead stop. For an emergency I think they'll do a helicopter, but you have to pay for it? No Cell service in the Canyon. Fo-get-abot-da phone! Take pictures with it.



On our resting day we spent time exploring the area. This is a rare rim-to-rim hiking route through the canyon because of the footbridges that are here (I think the only route, but I may be wrong about that). One bridge (Black) built 1928, the other about a third of a mile downstream (Silver) during late 1960's. A good walkabout for our day in the canyon was to cross the one bridge, go along the south side of the river and take the other bridge back. Just walking over that river on these footbridges is an experience in itself. It's only about 150 yards across. But the river below seems much more powerful than the typically gentle waterways we have here.

This is a special place along the Colorado for a few other reasons as well. One being the location where the Powell expedition first found a pueblo structure which is still partly there. The other reason is because there is a nice "beach" at this location for rafters to land and recuperate and replenish their fresh water.

The third day we crossed the river and hiked South on the Bright Angle Trail. (along Garden Creek. Why isn't it named Garden Creek Trail? I don't know.) Anyway, it was a verry verry - I'll add one more.. verry far hike up to the South rim.

So the "official" distance DOWN from the North Rim to Phantom Ranch is 14 miles (they say) and I was pretty sure (they) were shy a few miles in their estimate .. it seemed longer. And that was downhill.

But holy cow! That did not compare with the "official" 9 mile distance from Phantom Ranch UP to the South Rim. It seriously has to be at least double that! It has to be. Just sayin! We would hike for an hour and look up, and say ok. Hike for another hour. Look up.. No apparent change in elevation. Another hour, same thing. That happened quite a few times, but eventually... there actually was an end to that trail ... amazingly. It's not for the faint of heart and I was feeling pretty faint there for a long time .. til we made it. Awesome experience! Oh.. wait .. Epic experience! Yes Epic.