



**Durango – Capital Reef and Trails of the Ancients Trip Notes**  
**May 9 - 21, 2019**

**Quotes**

Allegedly I said this: "Somedays I 'm lazy, somedays I'm crazy, and somedays I feel like superwoman". Still true.

Another quote but from Tom on the way home: "We were held up a little today because of the snow in Denver and just made our connection there by maybe five minutes by really walking fast from gate 86 to gate 28. Neither one of us thought I could still go that fast but.... "

A favorite quote from a good (and young) friend: "You are certainly not lazy and you are in far better shape than most people half your age. I was joking with my parents about the adage "Life sucks, then you die." I told them we can't do anything about the second half of that statement so we might as well minimize the first part of the statement by making life suck as little as possible. You are doing well at achieving this. If "being lazy" spending the day with Tom rather than suffering through a difficult hike is the "less sucky" decision, then it was the correct one. :-)" Love this!



Pictures to give an idea of the landscape. Mind-boggling huge and dramatic. And high! Damn.

**Headlines**

**Our best meal?** Lunch in Boulder Utah out in the boonies. And our last meal at the Mahogany Grille at the Statler Hotel in Durango. (I might add, as a simpler choice, the Gazpacho restaurant in Durango.)

**Our best drive?** Surprisingly it was Tom's drive to Moab and onto Arches National Park and not the million dollar highway into Telluride. But that was pretty spectacular. He remembers the narrow roads, the sunshine, the views and I remember the elevation.

**Our best hotel?** The capitol reef resort two bedroom cabin. The creative space, the red rock cliffs view from the deck, the well planned layout, but definitely not their restaurant. Its proximity to the scenic drive up Capitol reef was absolutely spectacular. (It was well worth it for me despite the fact that I couldn't go back after breakfast and I couldn't go back after packing lunch so I had to get up as much as an hour earlier).

**The most unique and beautiful hotel?** By far and spectacular was The General Palmer Hotel in Durango. We were there pre- and gave up the Marriott hotel Post- Hike despite it being at least 1/3 the price. We returned to the general Palmer hotel despite it lacking in trained service and good management; it had wonderful antiques and an ambience beyond expectation. Plus location-location-location. In addition it had a presidential suite whereas the Statler Hotel did not.

**The most Interesting?** The geologic formations, per Tom, would blow anyone's mind. Remember I was here in 2013, and I was in Arches NP recently, I am on my way to Yellowstone and Grand Tetons, etc. And we are on our way to the Dolomites once again. All of which may be mind blowing overload. Smile.

About interesting? I would have thought that Tom would have immediately chosen the Durango to Silverton train ride. This suggests that there is just too much to choose. He did say that the lunch in Silverton at Handlebars was quite good and the restaurant decor interesting.

Labor? Colorado seems to have a problem with labor. There is a shortage of it which we don't understand because we have friends who tried to live here for five years and couldn't make a living so gave up and moved back to New Jersey.

Training or understanding of consumer needs? Is it that we are in the Midwest and life is different than what we expect in the east and the west? Is it that they are not trained enough or paid enough — because we keep hearing about employees calling out or not showing up? Always something: the espresso machine doesn't work. Or the menu isn't all available. Or they run out of plates at breakfast. They seem to have a different expectation and maybe that is after all mentally healthy. A slowing down.

**Our worse flight?** Returning home, Denver getting hit with snow and near closed down caused the earlier two Durango-to-Denver flights to cancel and ours to be delayed enough to expect to miss our connection. United Air double-booked us so we might make it home just much later. We are comfortable with delays and reasonably flexible. It helps to have an elite status and airline lounges.

Later- fastest walk? Running from B86 to B28 for a flight that should have left before we landed. We made it. I suspect it was Tom's fastest walk for some years.

**Our Telluride to Cortez road!** A Boulder the size of a building blocks Colorado highway

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/25/us/huge-boulder-blocks-co-highway-trnd/index.html>

Hey! This was our road that we just drove when we visited Telluride out of Durango last week. There were plenty of signs that read "watch for falling rock" but I never thought about anything this big.

**Massive boulder tumbles across Colorado highway, leaving 8-foot trench**

The two rocks weighed nearly 11 million pounds combined, officials said.

<https://apple.news/AmJQ6znoUTwKFjCCY-yvwtQ>



**Colorado for two full weeks**

Colorado here we come!

Both of us. Three days in Durango with Tom who has a car and will follow along for my 7-days (hopefully) of hiking. Then three more days in Durango with a special day trip on the historical

Durango to Silverton train. We enjoy extra loving. Many of these areas we've been before yet there's always a deeper understanding available. We shall seek.

Vacation Fibbing? Fodor's Travel reported that nearly one in seven Americans [have lied about taking vacations](#) and roughly 10 percent of people have faked photos on social media to make it appear as though they were on vacation, according to data from Jetcost. Another noteworthy figure: 52 percent of the respondents polled would not reveal to others that their trip was a disaster if that were the case

I am reminded of three things this morning as we depart - or try to depart:

- Fibbing, see above, isn't needed by someone that has anywhere from 20 to 30 trip reports a year.
- Disastrous trips? I am often times chastised for telling more of the cons than the pros of a trip. Feels more honest.
- Flexibility/adaptability is always needed as proven by the start of this trip.

The flight was delayed so much so as to surely miss our connection out of Denver to Durango. Then the next connection was sold out. Then the next connection was seven hours later. It was looking like a very long day.

Saving grace: Denver has the talking gargoyle. I may get a chance to see it before my October trip. Find the video - its super! Denver airport talking gargoyle <https://amp.usatoday.com/amp/3032167002>

What is exercise induced asthma? It's when you land and you have 10 minutes to get the other side of the terminal. (Not just for boarding - that was long gone). And you arrange a wheelchair for your husband and you try to run alongside a Kenyon type marathoner who promises to get us there. And he does and Tom tips him very generously and I follow along huffing and puffing but then remember it is 5000 feet of elevation in Denver so no wonder I can't keep up. I run up to the gate and ask if my husband has gone on board just as I see him surprising Mr. Kenyon with a few bills. The gate closed, the plane door closes, both of us on board with less than two minutes to spare and I start wheezing. Whee!

Mr. Talking Gargoyle is going to have to wait for my next trip.

Mr. Burton (at 84 now) should be very proud that he never boards the plane with the old folks, he never takes the terminal shuttle, and he always plods along behind me uncomplaining. But the United Lounge folks convinced him that this time he should go the fastest method - a wheelchair. Had he not, we'd been hanging around the terminal for at least 7 hours if not more and arriving to Durango in the dark. That run was all I could do.

We arrive in the sweet little Durango airport, get our rental car, and what did we do first? Find the best tacos we can along with a margarita. THEN we check into a historic hotel and we feel like we are in a museum. I absolutely LOVE it. Antiques everywhere, the rocking chair creeks, the place is like a museum yet still a 4-star AAA Award. That will be my pictures

But. Watching your weight? Long airport delays are not the way to lose weight. As an example, I had breakfast at 5 AM, another breakfast at the United club about 8 AM, my own meal on board followed by half of Tom's, and it's wasn't yet 12 o'clock noon. We start talking about tacos on Main Street in Durango. Which we do as soon as we can.

[Www.GeneralPalmerHotel.com](http://www.GeneralPalmerHotel.com)

Offering views of the San Juan Mountains, this refined hotel dating from 1898 lies close to restaurants and shops, and a block from the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad & Museum.



The Victorian-style, antiques-filled rooms and suites offer free Wi-Fi and cable TV, as well as coffeemakers.

Complimentary amenities include parking, freshly baked cookies and continental breakfast. Reserved - Our most prestigious suite, the Presidential King Suite offers views of Main street Durango, the Durango & Silverton Railroad and the stunning mountains that surround the town. The distinct, vintage furniture in this suite provides an extensive seating area, complete with a King sized bed, Victorian artwork and decor. This open, colorful suite provides you with additional features including a jacuzzi tub, large closet, un-stocked wet bar and mini kitchenette. End I'm thinking about giving up my residence Inn for the three days following the hike and moving back into The General Palmer. We'll see if the Durango to Silverton train wakes us up too early or if Main Street bothers us.

In the meantime, I am suffering a headache from the elevation. Probably lack of liquid and the alcohol additive. Mr. Burton is doing just fine.



From the airport direct to tacos and a margarita each. Maybe that was a mistake. The historic General Palmer Hotel. The elevator was a challenge until I learned that it was the oldest working elevator in Colorado and then I appreciated it.





General Palmer, followed by our first views of our presidential suite. That seems a little bit of an exaggeration but I really really like it.



The creaky rocking chair. It made me giggle.

I ran out to the back porch when I heard the railroad. Little did I know that the door would close behind me and I would be locked out in the rain. Eventually Tom missed me and came to the rescue but didn't care to watch the railroad in the rain. We will be on it for a full day after the hike.



All is good. Life is good. We feel very fortunate.

### Leaving Durango

We've had 3 lovely days in Durango and area. More to come but first is a week-long hike.

Thoughts: Colorado is sure foreign compared to New Jersey. There must be similarities but the immediate differences are glaring.

-Elevation. It's even tough to do the stairs. It's a good thing I've come out a bit earlier for my hike. Acclimation is needed but I would guess six weeks would be better than three days.

-Open empty land. We don't have much of that in New Jersey and there's fields of open land in Colorado.

-Building control. I would guess that anybody could put up a trailer or a shack anywhere in Colorado. We just don't have the space to let that happen in New Jersey.

-Pick-up trucks and older cars abound. But that too, with a heavier population and less land in New Jersey, there more controls needed.

-marijuana outlets. New Jersey keeps talking about it. Maybe legalization would calm them down?

-Huge mountains, rocky cliffs, but no sandy beaches.



Yet a drive and a walk through Durango suggests a lovely and interesting vacation land. An easy way of living. A friendly small town. Surrounded by glorious mountains and cliffs. Could I live here? Probably though I would likely feel claustrophobic despite the open areas. It's so good that we don't all need the same.

From [www.wikitravel.org](http://www.wikitravel.org) - Durango is in the southwestern part of the Rocky Mountains state of Colorado. It is perhaps most famous for the historic narrow gauge railroad that connects Durango with Silverton. It is the largest town in southwest Colorado with a population of about 16,000. Telluride? Sure, we were going to just pop on over to Telluride while we were in Durango. It reminds me when we lived in Belgium, relatives would show up and suggest they just pop on over to Italy. As though it were a day trip. I felt pretty stupid when I realized the distance to Telluride.

Yet it was full of fond memories and some of the last of Tom's skiing. He used to metamorphize into a ski bum in the winter and on his very last trip to Telluride I went along. He came off the slope one day and said "I'm done and I'm canceling my next hotel reservation." I half thought he was just being kind to me since I was a long-distance commuter and someone needed to stay at home to mind the livestock. But no, Telluride was his last ski trip and he only recently got rid of his gorgeous artistic Bogner ski outfits.

So off we went to renew acquaintances with Telluride. It seemed irresistible not to try the San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway despite the projected 2:45 hour drive. Tom likes little roads and we had a good car and I had crackers so I didn't lose my cookies.

San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Juan\\_Skyway](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Juan_Skyway)

Million Dollar Highway [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Route\\_550](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_550). I later learned that there was dual meaning to Million Dollars in that some thought so much gold was in the pavement . . . .

Tom didn't get his restaurant wish in Telluride because the lifts and very little are open until May 17. But we drove and walked the streets and ate at a charming little healthy place on their Main Street. We've decided our return next Saturday will be at our same downtown hotel. It isn't well run but it's friendly, lovely, quaint and in a perfect location.

Tomorrow is Sunday and I start the 7-day hike.

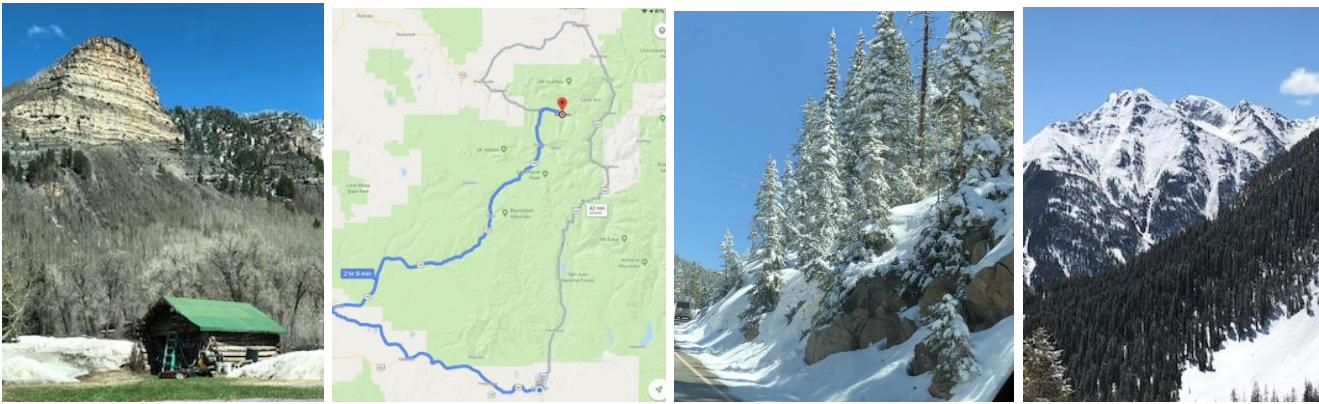
Oops. Typos: Tom enjoyed my "loving" vs "living" typo. Maybe Siri who caused it did too. I'll leave it as is.



This is the train station for the Durango to Silverton Railway and it is next-door to our hotel. We go next Sunday.

Gazpacho's restaurant served me a Trio of Gazpachos. Cheesy, regular, and cucumber with mango.





Map of the San Juan Scenic Byway.

We went over a few passes of 10,000 feet. My ears felt it. And felt it. Will I ever hear again?



This is a screenshot of the road from Silverton to Ouray.



A sign I missed so found on the web. This area into Ouray is known as The Switzerland of America. Sing along: where the deer and the antelope play.... (Apparently they were Elk)



Coming up: hiking! First in Mesa Verde National Park.

## **The Hike Following Days 1 and 2**

### **Hiking Colorado - here I come!**

Or a few days later I can say "there I've been". I'm now on a day-off having decided it was so hot and dirty and my legs needed a rest so I've taken the car with Tom on our way to Blanding Utah i.e. skipping day 3.

Summary from [www.ParksPlusHiking.com](http://www.ParksPlusHiking.com) - Our journey along the "Trails of the Ancient" continues northward on this new 7-day hiking tour. We'll visit well-known Mesa Verde National Park to view Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings, hike challenging and scenic trails in Canyons of the Ancients and Natural Bridges National Monuments, then explore remote and lesser known Capitol Reef National Park. Bring your National Park passport as four new entries await! End.

As many of you know, Steve and Nola started their own hiking company and they have been my favorite leaders and now good friends for a few years. Last I heard count I have been with them for something like 20 hikes and before then more with another company where they worked.

**Sun May 12 - Day 1 of hike - Prater Ridge**, Distance: 7 mi, Difficulty: 3 - My pedo: 8.3 and 37 flights of stairs, BF 1.

Lodging: Far View Lodge - 2 nights - Mesa Verde National Park –

Set 15 miles inside Mesa Verde National Park, this seasonal, casual hotel with a southwestern vibe is 2 miles from the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and 3 miles from the ancient dwellings at Cliff Palace. Featuring private, park-view balconies, the bright, TV-free rooms have handcrafted furnishings, and come with complimentary Wi-Fi, mini-fridges and coffeemakers.

Freebies include parking, and breakfast served in a polished, park-view restaurant/bar that offer patio dining. End.

From Tom: Not our typical hotel but adequate and had been recently renovated, so that was helpful. Yet a very tiny bathroom and shower. One was there for the Far View made it worthwhile. Thank goodness that it also provided a modern heating and air-conditioning system because it was cold at night and hot during the day. The main lure of the park was the cliff dwellings and that was pretty fascinating.

From Parks Plus - Our journey into the past begins as we commute from Durango to Mesa Verde National Park, where we'll hike the Prater Ridge Trail. While this trail does not visit any ancient Native American ruins, it showcases the rich ecological diversity of Mesa Verde that is sometimes overshadowed by those ruins and provides sweeping views of the Four-Corners area. As a moderate hike, Prater Ridge will also help us prepare for the longer, more challenging trails in the days ahead. Following today's hike, we head to Far View Lodge in the heart of Mesa Verde. End.

**Mon May 13 - Day 2 of hike - Spruce Canyon & Petroglyph Point**, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 4 - My pedo: 7.9 and 48 flights; BF: 0

From Parks Plus - Day 2 of "Ancients North" is all about exploring the remarkable Native American ruins of Mesa Verde. Our focus for the day will be the Spruce Canyon and Petroglyph Point Trails where we will enjoy stunning views of the Spruce Tree House ruins. Time permitting (and based on availability-- see below), we'll also hope to view the Cliff Palace and/or Balcony House on ranger-led tours.

Note that the availability of access to cliff dwellings and ranger-led hikes in Mesa Verde has varied in recent years due to a number of factors (instabilities identified in some of the cliff dwellings, for example). Our exact itinerary this day may vary based on conditions at the time of the tour. End.



It was an absolutely beautiful trail and even though many of the built in stone steps I had to pull myself up, or ease myself down, I liked the terrain and the trail and the ambience and it was one of my favorite hikes.

**Monday from Tom:** I'm going up to the cafeteria for a bite then on up to the museum. And now I'm back. Enjoyable visit, particularly the movie and sitting in the shade of the head ranger's house/office looking over to the Spruce Tree House ruins. I had brought a latte with me so very pleasant in the shade with a perfect temperature. End.

Tom has managed to see both of the museums, including the movie, and as you saw he has enjoyed the terrain.

A note, or two, about health and welfare: One should never come to high elevation with a sinus infection. I haven't been able to hear half of what is being said since I got off the airplane. Couple that with how I just want to be only 50 years old and felt sure that I could stay that way forever and I wonder if it is time to get realistic.

My hiking leader friends continue to allow me to come along and until they say no, and I feel certain they would when the time comes, I'll go. Next up after this seven day hike is a hike to the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone and it will be my fourth trip there.



The Park service has really created a lovely museum. When they have a film, they are irresistible and educational.

We find our own picnic spots and I would say this hiker found the best. (lost picture)

First the Pueblo Indians lived on the balcony. We saw some of those and then later we saw where they went under the cliffs. (another lost picture)

I had trout for dinner with the only weird thing is that they had a bacon and sweet salsa on the top. Tom had a wonderful beef short ribs dish which he only ate half of and leaders Steve took the other half for the next day sandwich. This fatty beef would haunt Tom through the night. (more lost pictures)



Whoever built the stone steps is probably in heaven now and I hope they are looking down and realizing how much we appreciate them. I would guess this work was done by the CCC.

Lost pictures: apparently because they were too large, wouldn't send.

Thank you CCC. Note that a big person or sideways with a backpack would never get through.

This was the most challenging spot but it worked. Steve held my trekking poles and talked me up to the toeholds and on the top Russell talked me through the little small finger holes to pull myself up.

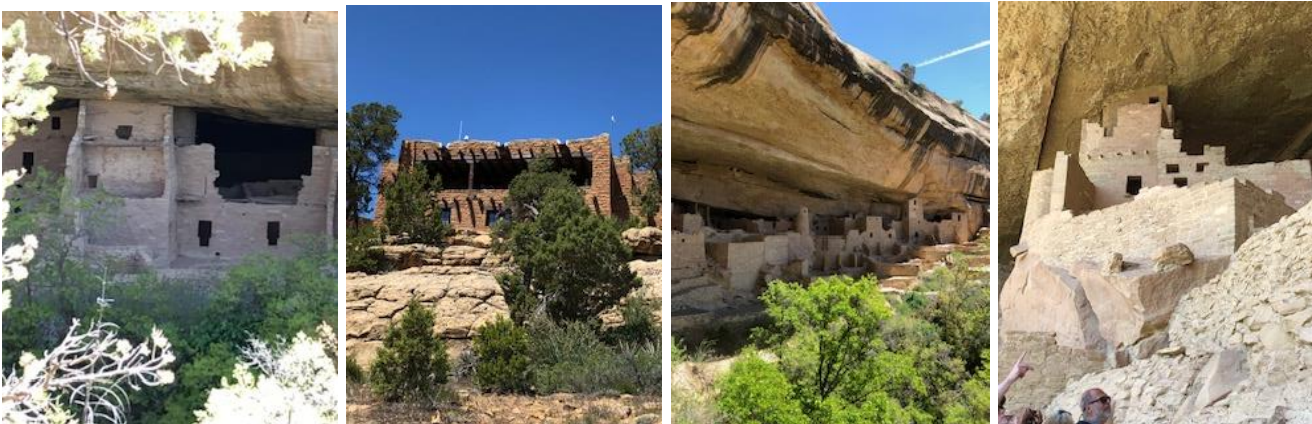
Thank you Jeff for those upper body muscles.

Note how steep and high are some of the steps and yet I still appreciated them immensely.

The area is known for this beautiful little colorful lizard.

The variety of hikers are always interesting and helpful. Beverly from Kansas City knew birds. This is Sara from Chicago and she knew flowers. She never saw this yucca type plant ready to bloom. It would soon give a very tall stalk of white flowers. Somewhat like the century plant.

It really wasn't but it seemed a very long way to get to this slick rock leading up to the museum.



It gave an overview of the treehouse cliff dwelling.

I wonder if Tom was at this overlook when we went through. It was quite possible that that is where he had his coffee.

Steve had arranged for an afternoon tour by a park ranger to the cliff palace. Nola reminded me that the pueblo people were living here at about the same time that Italy was in the renaissance. So little is known of the pueblo peoples. We learned that they feel very strongly that their civilization continue and even the younger generation continue their love and respect for the environment and the continuation of their customs.





I'm not sure but maybe this is Tom's picture of the treehouse cliff dwelling. We would later walk out and view of the balcony dwellings.

Dinner again was at the far view Lodge and I think we were all happy with our dinner. The night before the majority had trout and this evening many of us had salmon.

As usual and as Tom would say "life is good" - I look forward to telling you about Blanding and Day 3 no/hike and Day 4 real hike.

If you have access to any Apple device, I have a slew of pictures available on iCloud. Just ask.

### **Days 3 and 4 - from Mesa Verde to Blanding**

What was that Kenny Rogers song? About know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em? I folded and took the day off. I won.

Tom and I had a lovely leisurely day, sleeping in and checking out of the hotel only when we had to and having a long drive through the trail of the ancients to Blanding. We passed by many, many trailers and again thought how different is in Colorado. Big wide open spaces that I enjoy for vacation but probably would not be comfortable living among full time. There were a lot of desolate spaces and oddly a few oil rigs. Do I remember correctly that Utah has more federal owned land than any other state?

In a shady lovely little park we had a picnic and then went on to our surprisingly large and well decorated three bedroom apartment.

**Tue - Day 3 of hike- Sand Canyon Trail**, Distance: 13 mi, Difficulty: 5 - I am totally convinced that it would have been a BF of 5. They didn't get to the hotel to unpack and clean up until 45 minutes before dinner. I can't do it. Fortunately and kindly some of the hikers admitted that it was a difficult hike, hot and full sun, and not everyone made it to the top.

From [ParksPlusHiking.com](http://ParksPlusHiking.com) - Today we say goodbye to Mesa Verde and visit the little known Canyons of The Ancients National Monument where we will hike the lengthy and challenging Sand Canyon Trail. Alternating between slick rock, sand, and packed dirt, the trail passes numerous Native American ruins, believed to be occupied until approximately 1277 A.D. Further along the hike, the trail climbs the west canyon wall affording a great view of Sleeping Ute Mountain to the south. After retracing our steps to the trailhead, we'll make our way to Blanding, Utah for the evening. End. Lodging: Stone Lizard Lodging – 1 night only – arranged for a 3-bedroom upgrade.

<https://www.stonelizardlodge.com/> - Set along Highway 191, this quaint hotel is a 7-minute walk from the Pacheco Trail, and a mile from both The Dinosaur Museum and the Edge of the Cedars State Park. Accessed via external corridors and featuring hardwood floors and local artwork, the homey rooms provide smart TVs, free Wi-Fi and desks, as well as mini-fridges, microwaves and coffeemakers. Suites add living areas. An upgraded family suite has 3 bedrooms. Amenities include complimentary parking and continental breakfast, as well as a garden with a picnic area. As San Juan County natives, we have been restoring, little by little, the first motel built in Blanding in early 1947. Because of the influence of the local geology, history, and culture, we have a wealth of resources available to us in helping create our vision of a comfortable, cozy lodging facility. We feature local photographers, focusing on canyons, Anasazi Ruins, and Petroglyphs from our beautiful area. Our son, Adam, has used his artistic talent to create all our metal artwork.

- \* Three separate carpeted bedrooms: Master bedroom with king bed and half bath; Queen with Twin bedroom has one Queen bed and one Twin Bed; Double Twin bedroom has two Twin beds
- \* All bedrooms feature built in closets and 32 inch high definition Smart flat-screen televisions
- \* Cozy living room with high definition Smart flat-screen television
- \* Fully stocked kitchen with custom made cabinets, granite countertops, convection and conventional double ovens, refrigerator, microwave and dishwasher - \* Dining room with expandable table
- \* Living room with two sofas and two armchairs - \* Hardwood flooring with Navajo-Style area rugs
- \* Satellite cable television and free high speed wireless internet. End.

**Wed May 15 – Day 4 of hike - Natural Bridges Loop, Distance: 9 mi,**

Difficulty: 4, BF: 2 but only if you are afraid of ladders and heights. It was a super hike with only a better bit of boring in middle sections. Some got lost but no one seem to mind.

Lodging: Capitol Reef Resort – 3 nights - Arranged for a 2 bedroom cabin with 1 ½ baths - <https://capitolreefresort.com/> - 58 Acres of Paradise - Located at the doorstep of Capitol Reef National Park, Capitol Reef Resort offers an abundance of lodging options sure to satisfy. From guestrooms and luxury cabins to Conestoga wagons and teepees; guests will find a unique and comfortable destination, along with fine amenities, to recharge for your next adventure. Discover Capitol Reef - Just one mile from Capitol Reef National Park, you can explore almost 100 miles of natural wonders, including cliffs, canyons, domes and natural bridges. From Hickman's Bridge and Fishlake National Forest to Anasazi State Park and the Prehistoric Petroglyph, there are many other stunning sights to see and they're all within about an hour of this Torrey hotel. Additionally, enjoy easy access to all the area's parks, where you can delight in hiking, backpacking, canyoneering and photo tours. Love outdoor adventure? Our property puts you in the perfect location, as we're situated in the Grand Circle of National Parks – plan a day trip to the Grand Staircase, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park or Zion National Park. Situated right off of Highway 12, enjoy exploring so many more attractions and being able to easily get where you're going when staying at this Torrey, UT hotel. End.

More from PPH: yet another national gem will be added to the Parks Plus repertoire on this fourth day of the tour as our destination is Natural Bridges National Monument. Appropriately enough, we will hike the Natural Bridges Loop, which passes Sipapu, Kachina, and Owachomo Bridges. Similar to Mesa Verde and Canyons of the Ancients, the Natural Bridges area was occupied until around 1300 A.D. by Ancestral Puebloan peoples. Following today's hike, we'll make the spectacular drive up to Capitol Reef Resort near Torrey, Utah on scenic Highway 95.





The road from Mesa Verde to Blanding was pretty bland. Some scenery but pretty much the same thing on and on and on. Some nice snow covered mountains in far background. Our picnic once we arrived in Blanding with a swing-set nearby that is irresistible. But after lunch, there wouldn't be much swinging.



Why a three bedroom? Because it gave us an extra bath and because it was that or a small room. The little old hotel have been built in 1947 and lovingly restored. Many pieces of artwork were throughout the rooms. And on the front driveway, an autographed family impressed in the cement. .



And now we begin our hike with some real surprises. They're called ladders and places you shimmy up or down and plenty of places that we needed help. Rock climber and later Nola is always there.



This may have been one of my favorite hikes.



A little picnic in the shade.

This was the end of our day in natural Bridges monument. But it wouldn't be the end to seeing natural Bridges.

### **At the end of the seven day hike of which I did five**

Me again. Way late.

Why am I way behind in reporting? Is it because I realized that all these hikes were easy in 2013 and now they are not? I did a similar hike before. Out of seven hikes I only did five of these. I claim that I wanted to spend the day with Tom and I did have two delightful days but it was equally because I didn't have to go climb in any hills. Am I lazy or am I old?

**Thu May 16 - Day 5 of hike** - Cohab Canyon/Cassidy Arch/Grand Wash, Distance: 10 mi, Difficulty: 5 - I give up my BF (Barf Factor) ratings. It was the heat of Pinnacles national park that caused me to create the BF. Here, even in a very difficult hike that I barely managed, I just couldn't give it any bad BF because I liked it so well. And besides, the temperature was good with lots of breeze. Life is good. The legs are working.

Lodging: Capitol Reef Resort – 2nd of 3 nights - Two Bedroom Cabins at Capitol Reef Resort, National Park - <https://capitolreefresort.com/red-cliff-view-two-bedroom-cabin/>

From PPH: Some days have their literal ups and downs, Day 5 of Ancients North is a classic example. We begin today's hike at the Capitol Reef campground, promptly climbing up, to then down into Cohab Canyon. After two short (and optional) spurs to viewpoints, we'll join the Frying Pan Trail which twists/climbs (!) past sandstone domes and a series of gullies and ravines to a spur trail over to Cassidy Arch. Returning to the Frying Pan Trail from the arch, we'll descend just over 1,000' and join the Grand Wash Trail which goes through . . . (guess what) and ends back near the Fremont River. End.

Darned if I didn't dig up my old trip notes from Capitol Reef and Grand Escalante in October 2013 and find that I did the same hike plus Day 6. Did I remember them? No.

I added DAY 6 Itinerary only for the record because I decided to sleep in and spend the day with Tom instead.

**Fri May 17 - Day 6 of hike** - Navajo Knobs & Hickman Bridge, Distance: 11 mi, Difficulty: 5  
I didn't do this hike but I add it for records sake. I did it in 2013.



From PPH: The penultimate day of our tour provides probably the ultimate hike in Capitol Reef: Navajo Knobs. We'll actually do three separate though connected trails this day, beginning with a moderate climb to 133' long Hickman Bridge, probably the park's most well-known destination. From the Hickman Bridge Trail, we will continue on the Rim Overlook Trail, then join the Navajo Knobs Trail. Whether you complete the adventurous scramble to the very top of the Knobs or choose to turn around a bit lower, the views are fantastic and the hike back to the trailhead is mostly downhill. End.

What did we do? What did Tom do? Lots but mostly enjoy life. Here is a note he sent:

**Reflection** - I'm sitting on the deck of our "cabin" accommodation at Capital Reef Resort and looking at the marvelous mountains and geological formations making Utah so famous and thinking back to Little Tommy Burton in the little town of Burnsville, North Carolina and how he never imagined such a life of success, adventure, travel, accomplishment and well-being as has happened (now starting its 84th year). Thanks much to his wonderful mama and to so many people who thought he was worth it. So man, when I say Life is Good, I mean it. Thanks for all the sincere birthday wishes and pleasant thoughts. All the best, Tom

We went To Boulder: [https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g60758-d145843-r405469992-Highway\\_12\\_Scenic\\_Byway-Torrey\\_Utah.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g60758-d145843-r405469992-Highway_12_Scenic_Byway-Torrey_Utah.html)

We had an absolutely super and memorable Lunch: <https://utah.com/boulder-mountain-lodge>  
Hell's Backbone Grill & Farm <https://hellsbackbonegrill.com/our-story-index>

From a fantastic tour guide and friend: "I'm delighted that you joined Tom on his adventure up over the Mountain to Boulder. I love the idea that you were sitting in one of my favorite, quirky towns and thinking of me. There's something about that area that I love so much - I definitely need to get back."

**Sat May 18 - Day 7 and end of hike** - Fremont Gorge Overlook, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 4

From PPH: The final hike of our tour is one often overlooked by most Capitol Reef visitors--the Fremont Gorge Overlook. The trail begins from the Park's historic Blacksmith Shop paralleling the Fremont River then climbs for about a mile to edge of Fremont River Gorge. We'll continue along the rim of the gorge for about half a mile, then retrace our steps to the trailhead. After the hike, we'll enjoy lunch as a group then make the drive back to Durango to complete the tour. End. This one too I did in 2013 and didn't notice it being so steep.

It was a 5 hour drive to return from Capitol Reef to Durango but very pleasantly interrupted by a stop at a noted homemade pie shop. We were back in Durango by 6pm.

The Worst Kinds of Travelers — Are You One of Them? <https://blog.thediscoverer.com/the-worst-kinds-of-travelers-are-you-one-of-them/>

Next up? The Durango to Silverton historical railroad trip.



While in Capitol Reef one could take a day hike with the llamas. We had other things to do.



On the way back from Boulder Utah at about 10,000 feet we had quite the hail and snow storm. Later in the day while doing the scenic Drive in Capitol reef, it hit us again. Fortunately it never got the hikers.







This is Russell. You would think he ate all those pies but he probably only finished up some of ours. He is such a sweetheart that I would wish him for my daughter. They both live in Kansas City....

Until we meet again! Wanna go?

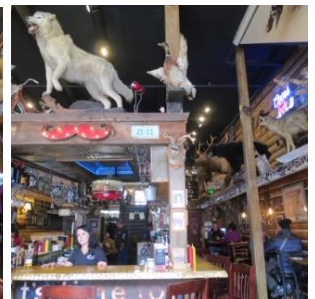
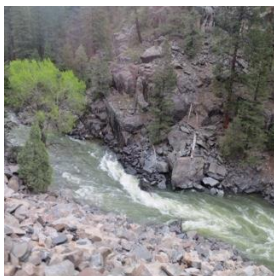
### **Sunday's adventure - The Durango to Silverton narrow gauge old timey real deal 1820's coal fired steam engine train**

Since I'm far behind reporting, here is from Tom. We've had 7 days of hiking though I took off two of them and now one more day in Durango under wet snowy skies.

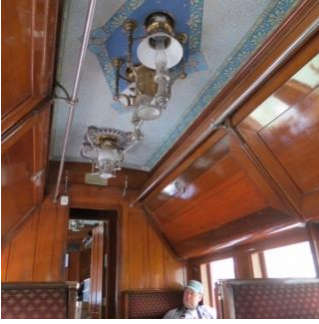
We left from Durango at 8 o'clock this morning, took an hour and a half for a great lunch in the most eclectic restaurant I've ever been in in the old western town of Silverton, Colorado (you'll see in the pictures) and were in the best coach - beautiful and comfortable old fashioned seats and appointments - even the original wooden faced sleepers- creaking full time - with such picturesque scenery, made for a memorable experience. We only got back just before six o'clock - long but well worth it. The people in the cheap seats in the open car were freezing their buns off (and other things).

So, though there was a bit of wind, light snow flurries (forecast 3 to 5 inches) and overcast and about 40 degrees, I think everyone from Diana's hiking group that took advantage of the presidential coach (8) were very pleased. I know we were.

More aspens here and elsewhere nearby than I've ever seen ANYWHERE! (Including Aspen)



Lunch in town. Drinks and snacks on board.



In Silverton, CO

Pedometer: From iPhone (right or wrong – everyone seems to have different numbers!)

Sun 5/12	8.3 miles	24,000 steps	37 flights of stairs
Mon 5/13	7.9 miles	22,000 steps	48 flights of stairs
No hiking on Tue			
Wed 5/15	8.8 miles	25,000 steps	34 flights of stairs
Thu 5/16	9.1 miles	27,000 steps	116 flights of stairs
No hiking on Fri			
Sat 5/18	6.0 miles	15,600 steps	75 flights of stairs

The End!



## ***Itinerary***

### **Thu May 9**

9:45am Depart Newark EWR via UA#1936  
12:19pm Arrive Denver DEN for plane change

1:32pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#4523  
2:47pm Arrive Durango DRO

Rental car Avis

Hotel The General Palmer Hotel – 3 nights  
567 Main Street, Durango, CO 81301 Tele: 970 247 4747  
[info@generalpalmerhotel.com](mailto:info@generalpalmerhotel.com) - <http://generalpalmerhotel.com>

*Offering views of the San Juan Mountains, this refined hotel dating from 1898 lies close to restaurants and shops, and a block from the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad & Museum. The Victorian-style, antiques-filled rooms and suites offer free Wi-Fi and cable TV, as well as coffeemakers. Complimentary amenities include parking, freshly baked cookies and continental breakfast.*

*Reserved - Our most prestigious suite, the Presidential King Suite offers views of Main street Durango, the Durango & Silverton Railroad and the stunning mountains that surround the town. The distinct, vintage furniture in this suite provides an extensive seating area, complete with a King sized bed, Victorian artwork and decor. This open, colorful suite provides you with additional features including a jacuzzi tub, large closet, un-stocked wetbar and mini kitchenette.*

Host Hotel Best Western Plus Rio Grande in Durango  
400 East 2<sup>nd</sup>, Durango Tele 970 385 4980

Summary from [www.ParksPlusHiking.com](http://www.ParksPlusHiking.com)

Our journey along the "Trails of the Ancient" continues northward on this new 7-day hiking tour. We'll visit well-known Mesa Verde National Park to view Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings, hike challenging and scenic trails in Canyons of the Ancients and Natural Bridges National Monuments, then explore remote and lesser known Capitol Reef National Park. Bring your National Park passport as four new entries await!

### **Sun May 12 - Day 1 of hike**

9:00am Pick up at host hotel Best Western

Prater Ridge, Distance: 7 mi, Difficulty: 3

Lodging: Far View Lodge – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Address: Mile Marker 15, Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330  
Tele: 970 529 4422 and (800) 449-2288

*Set 15 miles inside Mesa Verde National Park, this seasonal, casual hotel with a southwestern vibe is 2 miles from the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and 3 miles from the ancient dwellings at Cliff Palace. Featuring private, park-view balconies, the bright, TV-free rooms have handcrafted furnishings, and come with complimentary Wi-Fi, mini-fridges and coffeemakers. Freebies include parking, and breakfast served in a polished, park-view restaurant/bar that offer patio dining.*

Our journey into the past begins as we commute from Durango to Mesa Verde National Park, where we'll hike the Prater Ridge Trail. While this trail does not visit any ancient Native American ruins, it

showcases the rich ecological diversity of Mesa Verde that is sometimes overshadowed by those ruins and provides sweeping views of the Four-Corners area. As a moderate hike, Prater Ridge will also help us prepare for the longer, more challenging trails in the days ahead. Following today's hike, we head to Far View Lodge in the heart of Mesa Verde.

### **Mon May 13 - Day 2 of hike**

Spruce Canyon & Petroglyph Point, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 4

Lodging: Far View Lodge – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

Day 2 of "Ancients North" is all about exploring the remarkable Native American ruins of Mesa Verde. Our focus for the day will be the Spruce Canyon and Petroglyph Point Trails where we will enjoy stunning views of the Spruce Tree House ruins. Time permitting (and based on availability-- see below), we'll also hope to view the Cliff Palace and/or Balcony House on ranger-led tours.

Note that the availability of access to cliff dwellings and ranger-led hikes in Mesa Verde has varied in recent years due to a number of factors (instabilities identified in some of the cliff dwellings, for example). Our exact itinerary this day may vary based on conditions at the time of the tour.

### **Tue May 14 - Day 3 of hike**

Sand Canyon Trail, Distance: 13 mi, Difficulty: 5

Lodging: Stone Lizard Lodging – 1 night only – arranged for a 3-bedroom upgrade  
88 W Center St, Blanding, UT 84511 Tele on website: (435) 678-3323  
Tele per PPH: Tele: 435 425 3761  
<https://www.stonelizardlodge.com/>

*Set along Highway 191, this quaint hotel is a 7-minute walk from the Pacheco Trail, and a mile from both The Dinosaur Museum and the Edge of the Cedars State Park.*

*Accessed via external corridors and featuring hardwood floors and local artwork, the homey rooms provide smart TVs, free Wi-Fi and desks, as well as minifridges, microwaves and coffeemakers. Suites add living areas. An upgraded, 2-bedroom suite offers a kitchen, while a family suite has 3 bedrooms.*

*Amenities include complimentary parking and continental breakfast, as well as a garden with a picnic area.*

*As San Juan County natives, we have been restoring, little by little, the first motel built in Blanding in early 1947. Because of the influence of the local geology, history, and culture, we have a wealth of resources available to us in helping create our vision of a comfortable, cozy lodging facility. We feature local photographers, focusing on canyons, Anasazi Ruins, and Petroglyphs from our beautiful area. Our son, Adam, has used his artistic talent to create all our metal artwork.*

*\* Three separate carpeted bedrooms: Master bedroom with king bed and half bath; Queen with Twin bedroom has one Queen bed and one Twin Bed; Double Twin bedroom has two Twin beds*

*\* All bedrooms feature built in closets and 32 inch high definition Smart flat-screen televisions*

*\* Cozy living room with high definition Smart flat-screen television*

*\* Fully stocked kitchen with custom made cabinets, granite countertops, convection and conventional double ovens, refrigerator, microwave and dishwasher - \* Dining room with expandable table*

*\* Living room with two sofas and two armchairs - \* Hardwood flooring with Navajo-Style area rugs*

*\* Satellite cable television and free high speed wireless internet*

Today we say goodbye to Mesa Verde and visit the little known Canyons of The Ancients National Monument where we will hike the lengthy and challenging Sand Canyon Trail. Alternating between slick rock, sand, and packed dirt, the trail passes numerous Native American ruins, believed to be occupied until approximately 1277 A.D. Further along the hike, the trail climbs the west canyon wall affording a great view of Sleeping Ute Mountain to the south. After retracing our steps to the trailhead, we'll make our way to Blanding, Utah for the evening.



### **Wed May 15 – Day 4 of hike**

Natural Bridges Loop, Distance: 9 mi, Difficulty: 4

Lodging: Capitol Reef Resort – 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 nights  
2600 E Highway 24, Torrey, UT 84775 Tele: 435-425-3761  
Arranged for a 2 bedroom cabin with 1 ½ baths

<https://capitolreefresort.com/> - 58 Acres of Paradise - Located at the doorstep of Capitol Reef National Park, Capitol Reef Resort offers an abundance of lodging options sure to satisfy. From guestrooms and luxury cabins to Conestoga wagons and teepees; guests will find a unique and comfortable destination, along with fine amenities, to recharge for your next adventure.

Discover Capitol Reef - Just one mile from Capitol Reef National Park, you can explore almost 100 miles of natural wonders, including cliffs, canyons, domes and natural bridges. From Hickman's Bridge and Fishlake National Forest to Anasazi State Park and the Prehistoric Petroglyph, there are many other stunning sights to see and they're all within about an hour of this Torrey hotel. Additionally, enjoy easy access to all the area's parks, where you can delight in hiking, backpacking, canyoneering and photo tours. Love outdoor adventure? Our property puts you in the perfect location, as we're situated in the Grand Circle of National Parks – plan a day trip to the Grand Staircase, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park or Zion National Park. Situated right off of Highway 12, enjoy exploring so many more attractions and being able to easily get where you're going when staying at this Torrey, UT hotel.

Yet another national gem will be added to the Parks Plus repertoire on this fourth day of the tour as our destination is Natural Bridges National Monument. Appropriately enough, we will hike the Natural Bridges Loop, which passes Sipapu, Kachina, and Owachomo Bridges. Similar to Mesa Verde and Canyons of the Ancients, the Natural Bridges area was occupied until around 1300 A.D. by Ancestral Puebloan peoples. Following today's hike, we'll make the spectacular drive up to Capitol Reef Resort near Torrey, Utah on scenic Highway 95.

### **Thu May 16 - Day 5 of hike**

Cohab Canyon/Cassidy Arch/Grand Wash, Distance: 10 mi, Difficulty: 5

Lodging: Capitol Reef Resort – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 nights

Some days have their literal ups and downs, Day 5 of Ancients North is a classic example. We begin today's hike at the Capitol Reef campground, promptly climbing up, to then down into Cohab Canyon. After two short (and optional) spurs to viewpoints, we'll join the Frying Pan Trail which twists/climbs (!) past sandstone domes and a series of gullies and ravines to a spur trail over to Cassidy Arch. Returning to the Frying Pan Trail from the arch, we'll descend just over 1,000' and join the Grand Wash Trail which goes through . . . (guess what) and ends back near the Fremont River.

### **Fri May 17 - Day 6 of hike**

Navajo Knobs & Hickman Bridge, Distance: 11 mi, Difficulty: 5

Lodging: Capitol Reef Resort – 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 nights

The penultimate day of our tour provides probably the ultimate hike in Capitol Reef: Navajo Knobs. We'll actually do three separate though connected trails this day, beginning with a moderate climb to 133' long Hickman Bridge, probably the park's most well known destination. From the Hickman Bridge Trail, we will continue on the Rim Overlook Trail, then join the Navajo Knobs Trail. Whether you complete the adventurous scramble to the very top of the Knobs or choose to turn around a bit lower, the views are fantastic and the hike back to the trailhead is mostly downhill.

### **Sat May 18 - Day 7 and end of hike**

Fremont Gorge Overlook, Distance: 5 mi, Difficulty: 4

The final hike of our tour is one often overlooked by most Capitol Reef visitors--the Fremont Gorge Overlook. The trail begins from the Park's historic Blacksmith Shop paralleling the Fremont River then climbs for about a mile to edge of Fremont River Gorge. We'll continue along the rim of the gorge for about half a mile, then retrace our steps to the trailhead. After the hike, we'll enjoy lunch as a group then make the drive back to Durango to complete the tour.

Note – it's a 5 hour drive to return from Capitol Reef to Durango

7:00pm Drop off back at host hotel Best Western

Host Hotel Best Western – see above

Hotel Residence Inn Durango – 3 nights in a studio, king, sofa bed  
21691 US Highway 160 West Durango Colorado 81301 Tele 970 259 6200

Canceled Stayed again in The General Palmer Hotel, above

### **Sun May 19**

7:30am Boarding begins and must be boarded and seated 15 minutes prior t departure

8:00am Depart Durango Train – tickets in file for Presidential Class  
Reservations made through Tele: 970 247 2733

<https://www.pointsinfocus.com/learning/field-guides/durango-silverton-narrow-gauge-railroad/>

11:30am Arrive Silverton

1:45pm Depart Silverton

5:15pm Arrive back in Durango

### **Tue May 21**

11:30am Depart Durango DRO via UA#5221

12:44pm Arrive Denver DEN for plane change – short connection but one later flight available

1:30pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#749

7:20pm Arrive Newark EWR

Uber.

### **Participants**

Carol Mueller from Madison WI and Tucson

Russell Moody from KC

Sara Flosi from Chicago

Bill Peters

Joel Traylor

Stephen Leach who sent us Pocket Coffee

Bill Meredith – no train

Steve Meckstroth 303 957 6900

Nola Stewart 303 249 8432

### **Emergency**

Sue Ann Martinez 732 236 7651

Has Pandora

Randy Fritts 732 671 5510

Neighbor to the west – has key

Adam Basile 732 673 2582

Helper – knows house and pond

Kathy/Gary Kestler 732 671 5311

Neighbor to the east – has key



More numbers on kitchen counter.

Emergency Assistance Plus Program – 24/7

United Mileage Plus member #0186014 (card in file and in D's Wallet)

Tele: 866 816 2073 or 60 328 1752 collect

**Reminders**

Take headlamp

AAA Colorado and Utah book

Bar soap for parks hotel

Garmin GPS for Tom

**Links**

Map of San Juan Skyway - <https://www.google.com/search?q=san%20juan%20skyway&tbm=isch>