

A Journal of the SAS Four Corners Tour: May 22 to June 6, 2009

By Gil Watson

Editor's Note: Provided is a reference to the amount of time our group spent visiting each area of the Four Corners. For complete coverage of the specific tours see Kit Krozser's daily blog at <http://www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/kitkrozser/1/tpod.html>

Friday May 22, 2009: Left Regina at 5:25 am via Calgary and Denver to Albuquerque by way of Air Canada and United Airlines – traveled with Stuart and Betty Ann Golly to Albuquerque where we met with Jack and Alice Trusty, then forward to the Club House Inn where we met with the rest of our crew – David Meyer and Robert Clipperton, with Keith and Bertha Lewis and later with Kit Krozser and Louise Kilby with Norma Fraser, and Dorothy and Naomi Bird.

Saturday, May 23rd: From Albuquerque we travelled to Petroglyph National Monument, which overlooks the city of Albuquerque. Local name for the location is Boca Negro – Black Mouth Canyon. Walking trail of some 1-½ miles (Mesa Point trail), and a lesser trail (Macaw Cliff Base Trail) were explored. En route to Aztec Ruins stopped and photographed a church at San Isidore. Our noon stop was at El Bruno's near Bloomfield, New Mexico and Cuba, NM. We toured the Aztec Village Museum and the site. Drove to Durango, NM and checked into the General Palmer Hotel for the night. This hotel is a National Heritage site.

Sunday, May 24th: David, Bob and I returned to Aztec Village site while the balance of our crew took the narrow Gauge Railway trip from Durango to Silverton, NM. This was a first and I hope a last experience as David and Bob took me around the site in a wheelchair. I was most appreciative of their efforts.

Travelled to Bloomfield, NM for lunch. Drove then to Salmon Ruins located just east of Farmington, NM. This site, containing an original homestead site as well as Anasazi Ruins, was named after a pioneer native settler, Peter Milton Salmon. Travelled to Shiprock, NM and stopped to photograph the Natural Rock formation from which the town gets its name. We continued on to Cortez, CO for the night. Crew bunked down at the Days Inn in Cortez.

Monday, May 25th: The crew left Cortez for the 30-minute drive to the Mesa Verde National Park, which is a World Heritage site. It was so declared September 8, 1978.

Tuesday, May 26th: This is the second day at Mesa Verde for the group but the first for me. Our first stop was at the Mesa Verde Archaeological Museum where all of the finds from the excavations at Mesa Verde are extremely well displayed. We learned from our visit the time frame of the various periods from the Mesa Verde area. They were:

- 1) Early Habitation Period = 10,000 – 1300 years ago (ya)
- 2) Basketmaker Period = ~ 1600 ya
- 3) Modified Basketmaker Period = ~ 1300 ya
- 4) Development Pueblo Period = ~ 1200 ya
- 5) True or Classic Pueblo Period = ~ 800 ya

On the way to Wetherhill Mesa we stopped and visited the Cedar Tree Tower with its connected kiva. At Wetherhill, we took a tram tour to Kodak House Ruins and to Long House Ruins. Wetherhill Archaeological Project was conducted here from 1958-1965.

En route with the tram we saw one of three herds of wild horses that inhabit the Park. They came as visitors from the Ute Reservation and stayed. We returned to Cortez happy but very tired.

Wednesday, May 27th: Our guide for the next two days, Jim Calorin, met us at Days Inn and we took off for the Valley of the Ancients at 8:30 am. Our first stop was at Kelly's B&B where we looked at a fine pottery display and toured a kiva. The site was named for resident archaeologists, George Kelly. Next we stopped and toured the Castle Rock for kivas and burials. Visited an overhanging rock art site adjacent to the highway on which the second rock art site and Navajo site were located next to an almost antique junk shop.

Stopped for lunch at Hovenweep (meaning "deserted valley") Ranger Station and then visited two pueblo sites within this complex. The sites were made a National Monument in 1923 and consist of Cajon, Holly, Square Tower, Horseshoe, Hackberry, and Cutthroat Castle. We watched a 10-minute film on all sites at Hovenweep viewed at the Ranger Station. We returned to Cortez at 6:15 pm.

Thursday, May 28th: At 9:00 am we met with our guide Jim at the Anasazi Heritage Center in Delores, CO for our trip to the Canyon of the Ancients. Before starting our tour, we visited the museum in the Center with our guide and the museum curator, Caroline Landes. We visited the Canyon of the Ancients with its three major attractions (there are some 6000 sites in the entire Canyon of the Ancients):

- 1) Painted Hand Pueblo
- 2) Lowry Pueblo
- 3) Sand Canyon Pueblo

David, Robert, Louise, Norma, Kit and I drove to Monticello, Utah for a coffee stop and excellent, if evil, cheesecake. We continued on and photographed the canyon between Monticello and our destination, Newspaper Rock State Park. We photographed the spectacular pictographs here then checked into the Four Corners Inn at Blanding, Utah at 6:00 pm for the evening.

Friday, May 29th: We visited an excellent museum in Blanding called Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum. There are fine Pueblo Ruins on the museum property.

We travelled from Blanding to Butler Wash Indian Ruins. As well as the usual kivas, towers, and outbuildings, we got to see some beautiful prickly pear cactus beds. We continued on to Mule Canyon Ruins, which were excavated by the University of Utah in 1973 and dated to AD 1000-1150. The site consists of the usual kiva and tower with a living area (room block).

We continued on to Natural Bridges National Monument, visiting and photographing the sites (with Hopi names) in this order:

- 1) Sipapu Bridge

- 2) Horse Collar Ruins
- 3) Kachina Bridge
- 4) Owachomo Bridge

Our guide we knew only as “Ranger Becky”. We continued on to the Valley of the Gods. After a very spectacular drive among the hoodoos and on a gravel road with “the grandmother of all hair-pin turns” to quote Robert, we arrived at Mexican Hat, Utah for the evening just ahead of a very heavy windstorm. We stayed at the Hat Rock Inn.

Saturday, May 30th: We drove from Mexican Hat (7:00 am) to Goulding’s Lodge, which is some 20 miles away, on the Navajo Reservation. Here we began our Mystery Valley and Monument Valley tours into Utah and Arizona. We stopped for a noon barbecue at the Handprints Anasazi Ruins. Excellent hamburger cooked over mesquite wood fire. Entered Monument Valley at 12:45 pm. Following the tour we drove to Kayenta, AZ arriving at 5:45 pm in a severe sand storm. We stayed overnight at Monument Valley Holiday Inn.

Sunday, May 31st: This was a day-off for Bertha, Kit, Norma, Dorothy and myself. The balance of the crew visited the Navajo Monument. We stopped at a bakery where Norma picked up a birthday cake for Keith. Between Kayenta and Tuba City, AZ. The ladies stopped at an open-air Flea Market. We also stopped for more shopping at a feature called Elephants Feet where there is a roadside jewellery stand near Red Lake, AZ. We stopped for lunch in Tuba City at Hogan Restaurant where the group picked up piñon nuts. Visited museum in Tuba. It is more of a gift shop but nice except for the infernal chanting music.

Arrived at Cameron, AZ at 5:40 (4:40 their time). We checked into Cameron Trading Post and Lounge for the evening. This is the most exquisite hotel we have stayed in so far.

Monday, June 1st: Left Cameron at 10:00 am and travelled to Winslow, AZ with the following stops en route: Lomaki Ruins in the Wupatki National Monument, the Citadel Trail, Wupatki Center, Sunset Crater National Center, and the Lava Flow Trail. We arrived in Winslow at 3:45 and checked into the La Posada Hotel.

Tuesday, June 2nd: Left La Posada Hotel, which is a national treasure, at 11:00 am. Our first stop was at the Petrified Forest National Monument. Then onto the points of interest for photography:

- 1) Crystal Forest
- 2) Jasper Forest
- 3) Agate Bridge
- 4) Blue Mesa
- 5) The Tipis
- 6) Newspaper Rock
- 7) Painted Desert and Lacy Point
- 8) Wipple Point, Pintato Point
- 9) Chinle Point

10) Painted Desert Inn Historic site.

We then continued onto Petrified Forest Visitor Center for lunch. We bypassed the Hubbell Trading Post Historic site. We drove to Chinle, AZ and checked into the Canyon de Chelly Inn at 6:15 pm for the evening.

Wednesday, June 3rd: We were picked up at Canyon de Chelly – Best Western Hotel at 9:00 am by Leander Satly for a trip to Canyon de Chelly. We travelled in four Jeeps for this outing. Our driver and guide was Eleanor. Our stops were:

- 1) Kokopelli Caves Petroglyphs
- 2) Standing Rock Petroglyphs
- 3) First Ruin
- 4) Junction Ruins
- 5) White House Ruins
- 6) Speaking Rock
- 7) Spider Rock (we had lunch at the base)
- 8) Big Man Ruins
- 9) Beehive Ruins (the river we are crossing and re-crossing is the Chinle River)
- 10) Dog Rock
- 11) Echo Ruins
- 12) Cat Rock in Death Canyon (scene of the 1805 massacre)
- 13) Round and Square Ruins
- 14) Tear-Drop Cave
- 15) Ledge Ruins
- 16) Martini Rock (because of much hangover)
- 17) Antelope House Ruins
- 18) Long Walk Rock (where 500 Navajo hid from it Carson and his troops)

We returned to Canyon de Chelly Inn at 5:45 and then travelled on to St. Michaels, AZ checked into the Navajo Land Inn at 6:45 pm.

Thursday, June 4th: We drove through St. Michaels, passing extensive lava flows en route to Albuquerque, NM. We arrived and checked in to Club House Inn at 1:00 pm. The crew did a tour of “Old Town Albuquerque.”

Friday, June 5: The group this morning toured Old Santa Fe, NM and then returned and began packing for our return home tomorrow.

Saturday, June 6th: Four tired but happy travellers – Stuart, Betty Ann, Norma and I – were at Albuquerque International Airport for our return flight at (yawn) 4:00 am. A slight glitch developed when a Denver to Vancouver flight was delayed for 30 minutes waiting for a VIP to board. This made our Denver to Calgary flight also 30 minutes late and thereby missed our connecting flight from Calgary to Regina. We were rerouted to Regina via Edmonton and therefore instead of arriving in Regina at 5:00 pm as scheduled we arrived at 9:30 pm. In spite of this, all were very happy to send a vote of thanks to our coordinator Alice Trusty for arranging and managing a wonderful vacation for us all.