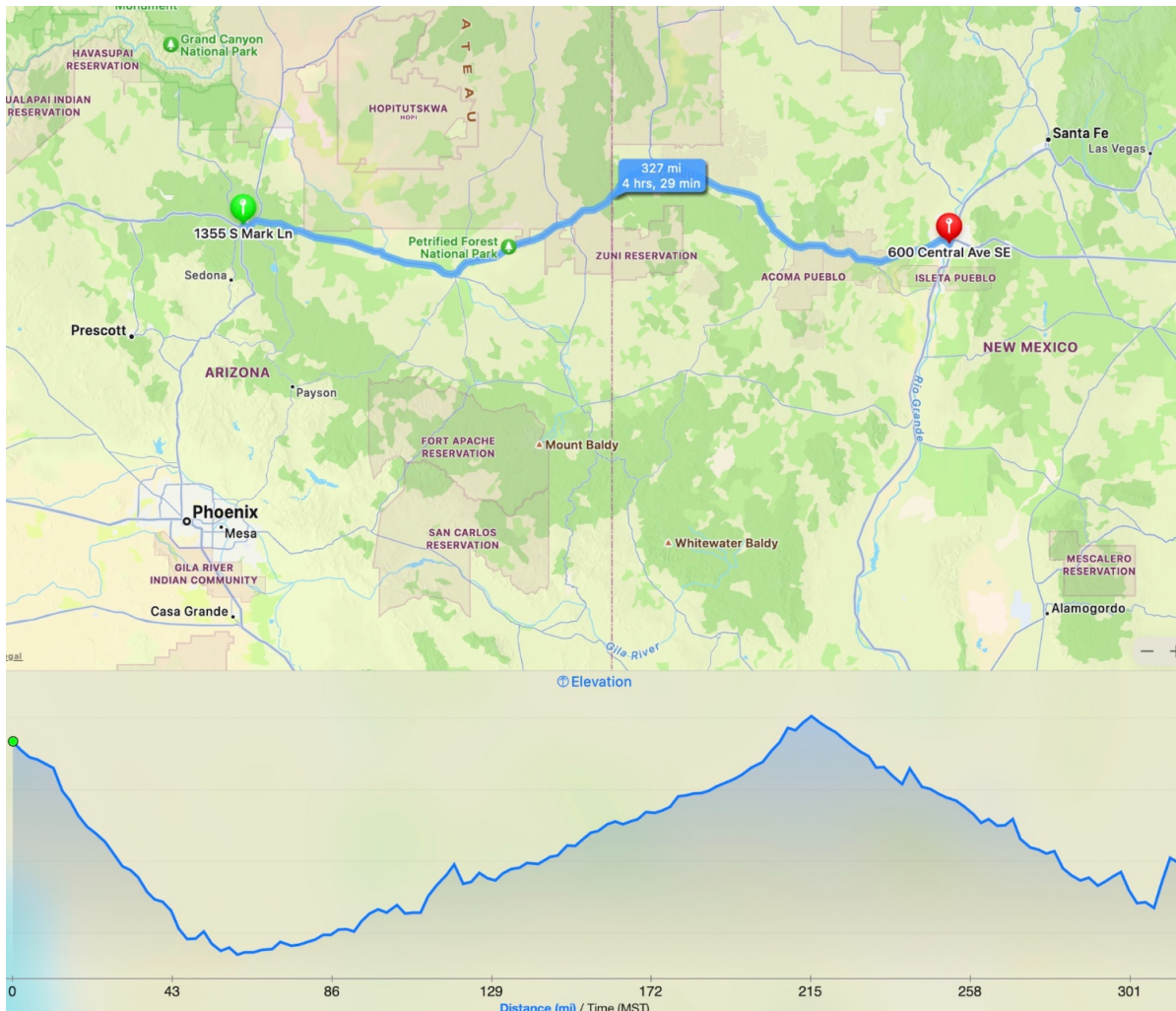


Day Four | Roger's Travelers Notebook



Elevators are great for meeting people. It's a captive audience, and even if they're annoyed, they have to respond. I met a man and we exchanged greetings. Between the 1st and 3rd floor, I found out he was from Pasadena and I told him we were from Fresno. He didn't make eye contact and seemed nervous talking in the elevator.

This morning, He was in the lobby heading out to his car to load up, as we were. I passed by him and said, "Hey Pasadena." He looked at me and brightened up and said, "Fresno!" Just like we were best friends.

We said a few pleasantries and then I said to him, "Did you bring your friends with you?" He looked a bit puzzled about the statement but said, "No it's just my wife and my son who are with me." Pointing to the logo on his ball cap I said, "You mean *Smith and Wesson* are not with you?" At that, he got the joke and laughed. He told me, "I have been tempted to make a sign outside of my house that says, *Smith and Wesson lives here: We do not call 911.*"

I said, "You support Trump?" He jokingly replied, "No way, I'm all in for Harris/Walz!" We both agreed that California has millions of conservatives. We also acknowledged that while there are more Democrats, our ranks are growing and the pendulum is swinging. We shook

hands and became good friends, for that moment in time.

We left Flagstaff, Arizona and headed east to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Soon, we spotted a brown road sign that said Walnut Canyon National Monument, next right. We discussed whether we should stop and see what it is. We decided that if it wasn't too far off the beaten path, we would check it out.

Turning right the sign said it was only 3 miles to the Canyon. Let's do it!



Being a National Monument, we didn't have to pay the \$25 entry. We have an *old person's* lifetime Senior Park's pass, which amazingly we remembered to put in our car when we left Fresno.

The nice government employee asked for our I.D. (But not for voting, of course). I showed our pass and I.D. and he waved us through. We drove a short distance to the visitor's center parking. Being Monday morning, the lot wasn't full, and we easily found a spot.

We had no idea what we were about to see.

There was a sign. It indicated two trails. We could take the Rim Trail. We could also take the Island Trail.



There was a massive window at the visitor's center that overlooked a canyon. From there, we could see ancient cliff dwellings. It was really exciting.



I overheard the ranger telling a couple that the Island Trail is strenuous but allows a close view of the cliff dwellings. We decided to do that one.

The trail descended about 200 feet with 138 stairs. It was a very nice trail, paved all the way with handrails along the stairs. The sign said, "You don't have to go down, but you have to come back up."



Just as the ranger said, we began seeing cliff dwellings. Incredible.





These dwellings were built around 700 years ago by a robust pueblo community. According to a volunteer ranger we spoke to, there were at least 400 people living in these dwellings. The people had a saying: "The land will tell us when it is time to move." Meaning, that if there is a drought or a decrease in the number of game, it would indicate that they should find new hunting grounds.

Carol and I easily imagined hundreds of people living on these cliffs. We could still see clear evidence of fires in their dwellings, used for warmth and cooking.



The hike lasted for about an hour. We got winded a few times due to the high altitude. Overall, it was relatively easy and quite fascinating. We wanted to take the Rim Trail, but we had to continue our journey.

We were back on the highway, crossing the border into our third state, New Mexico. The sky was a deep blue, with billowy clouds. It was a beautiful day to continue our journey.



It wasn't long before we crossed The Great Continental Divide. The Great Divide separates the watersheds of the Pacific Ocean from those of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.



Map of the Great Divide.



Driving isn't always exciting so we rolled along, stopping once for gas, toward Albuquerque where we would spend the night.



Tomorrow it is onward to Amarillo, Texas where we will assuredly meet new people and have new experiences.

- Friday **August 23** - Barstow, California
- Saturday, Sunday **August 24,25** - Flagstaff, Arizona
- Monday **August 26** - Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Tuesday **August 27** - Amarillo, Texas
- Wednesday **August 28** - Weatherford, Oklahoma
- Thursday **August 29** - Branson, Missouri
- Friday **August 30** - Branson, Missouri (Conference Begins)
- Saturday **August 31** - Branson, Missouri
- Sunday **Sept 1** - Branson, Missouri
- Monday **Sept 2** - Branson, Missouri (Labor Day - Conference Ends)
- Tuesday **Sept 3** - Homeward bound itinerary TBD