

Wild West Adventure – May 2017



This year we're going in a different direction: Out West, over the Rockies to Colorado and Utah!



Since we know nothing about the outdoors, we'll be traveling with Smithsonian Journeys, in a group of 18 people and two guides.



Welcome to Durango, CO. Smell that fresh mountain air!



Hey, waitaminnit here—BEARS?? Nobody said nuthin' about bears!!
These Smithsonian people had better know what they're doing....



They love their Cowboy heritage out here (and tourist dollars!)



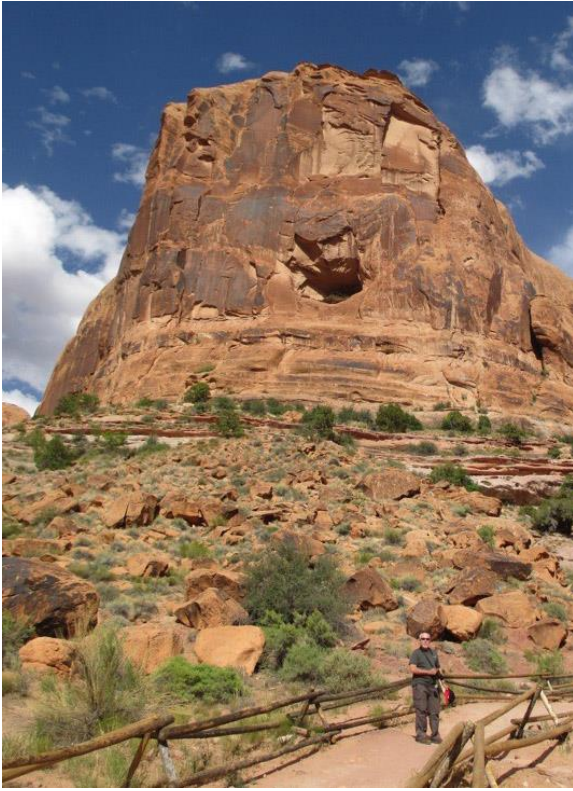
Lucky me – I've brought my favorite Cowgirl!



On the road to Moab, Utah. The road runs in a natural valley, with towering bluffs on each side.



I learn the difference between a *mesa* and a *butte*.
This is a *mesa* (from the Spanish word for table) – like a table, wider than it is tall....



...and this is a *butte*, taller than it is wide.
(although there can be some overlap...
that is to say...

There's no absolute to be a butte!)



I think this is a cute butte!



Canyonlands National Park. All this used to be the bottom of an inland sea. You can see the eons of erosion as the water became trapped and evaporated.



It's so.... vast and.... open. As a city boy, I'm not used to this. Where are the buildings? The cars? The people?



Scenic overlook through a natural stone bridge



Of course, we had to get into the picture!



Overlooking the meandering Colorado River



OK, so it's not **THE** Grand Canyon, but it is still **A** Grand Canyon!



It's a new day as we enter Arches National Park just outside Moab, Utah.



The scenery is breathtaking!



Weird and fantastic rock formations abound. You can just wander through them!



Do we look rugged, or what?
Nobody would guess that we're just a couple of City Slickers on vacation!



The famous “Balanced Rock”. Different densities of the different rock layers eroded at different rates, leading to this precarious-looking position.



Closer view from another angle.
Probably won't fall for another few thousand years, but still... not standing beneath it!



I prepare for the climb up to the famous delicate arch. It's about a mile, and not too steep...



...although I admit I did NOT like this section at all, on a slant with a drop-off on the left. I hugged like a bug on the wall as I ascended...



But, WOW -- so worth it at the end!



And yes, that is me -- another YOLO moment!! It took all my courage to do it!



Judy wisely stayed behind – and after she saw the photos, was glad she did!



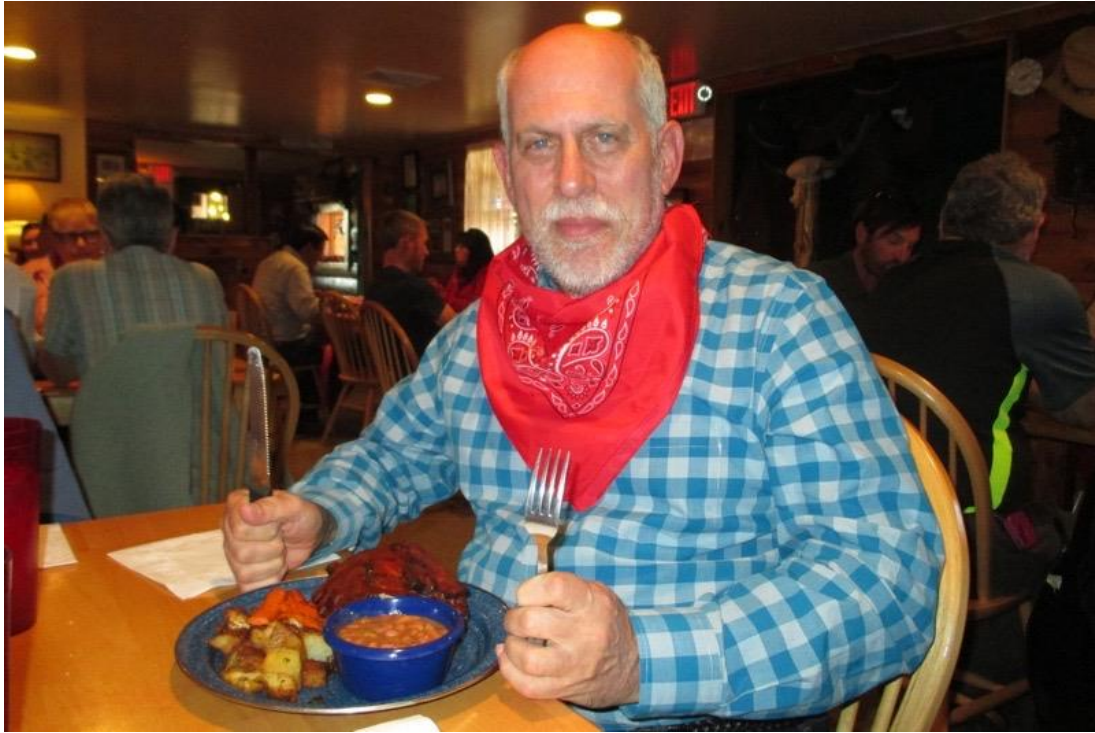
But we needed her to hold up the mountain – like The Incredible She-Hulk!



On the road again, arriving in Bluff, Utah, for dinner at the Cottonwood Steakhouse.



The view from our patio at The Red Rose Inn. Now we know why they named the town Bluff!



Dinner: Slow-roasted barbequed BEEF. Them be some mighty fine vittles, ma'am!
(The shirt is mine, from Old Navy – but they supplied the Cowboy bandanna!)



Hmmm.... my Cowgirl says she wants to play rodeo.... see you later!



Today promises to be a great day, as we head out to Monument Valley, the iconic setting of the great Old Western movies. I have always wanted to visit there! Open range--watch out for cattle crossing the road!



“Mexican Hat Rock”. Seriously—it’s on the map!
OK, it does look like a head wearing a sombrero....



Approaching Monument Valley: "Forrest Gump Point"
(In the movie, this is the spot where Forrest stops his cross-country run, turns around, and says "I'm tired – I'm going home."). What a view!



"John Wayne Lookout". Reportedly, "The Duke" liked to sit out here and take in the view between filming takes (and before there was a gift shop). Fantastic!



“John Ford Point”, named after the director of all those John Wayne Westerns.
(They even have a Cowboy and his horse to complete the scene!)
And even though it is May, it is quite chilly out here in the high desert!



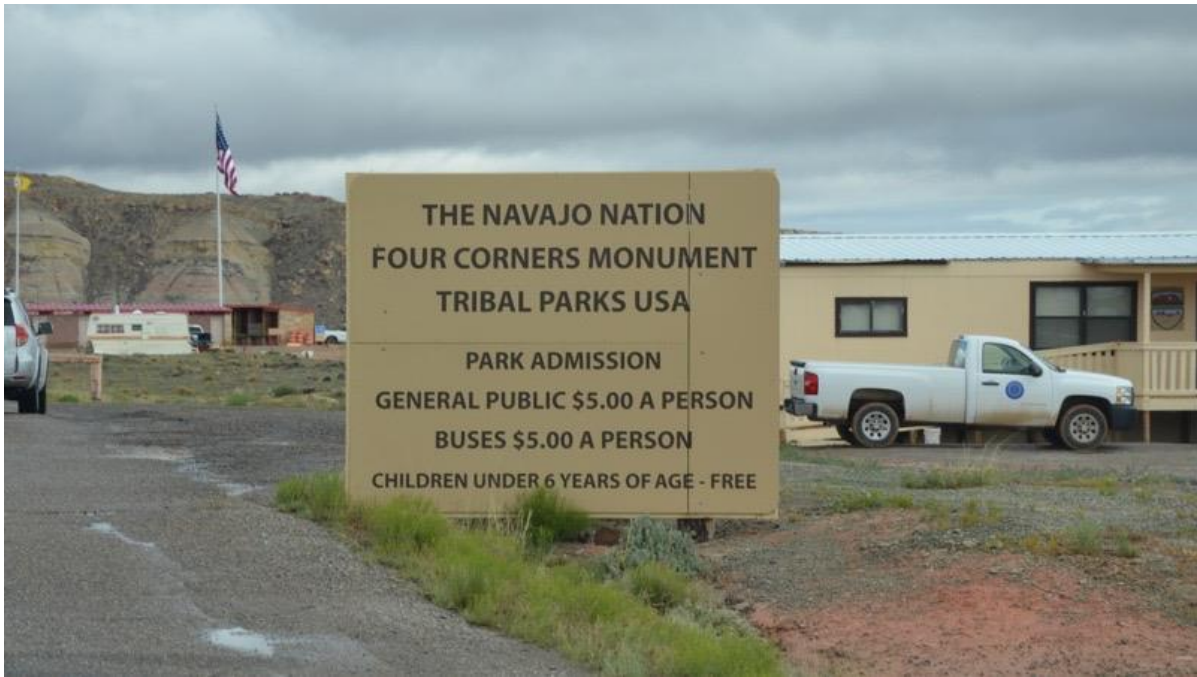
“The Cube”. It is... what it is!



The landscape is stunning; the desolation is astounding; the sky is threatening...



Practicing for my next career as a photo-journalist for National Geographic.
Right after I took the shot, the skies opened up with a fierce downpour.
Quick, everyone back in the van!



Our final stop – the Four Corners.



Its claim to fame – the only place in the US where 4 states meet.
It's basically just a spot on the map!



It is literally in the middle of nowhere, but since we're in the neighborhood, let's drop in!



After the rain, the mud was so thick we almost lost our boots in it!



“Four States / Here Meet / In Freedom / Under God”
(Okay / Pretty Underwhelming / But Still / Pretty Cool!)



Proof that our love truly knows no boundaries! Holding hands in four states at once!

Living for Adventure – and Vacay!