

Utah Adventure

Yi and Juan asked us to come to Utah to help them explore the state in which they are teaching. They selected Moab as a destination. Gail and I flew to Salt Lake City and had Wednesday dinner with them at an excellent Chinese restaurant. We then drove in the dark to Price and stayed overnight in a motel there. The next day we drove to Moab for lunch and then went into Arches National Park as far as the Delicate Arch which appears on some Utah car license plates.



The route from Price to Moab follows around the south side of the tall Book Cliffs which are at the edge of the Roan Plateau. In places they resemble shelves of books. This view shows a major railroad and dry hills in the foreground.



The Green River passes through the town of the same name. I noted that its edges are infested with the invasive Russian Olive trees among the native Cottonwood trees. In Arches Park I saw valleys filled with invasive Tamarisk (Salt Cedar) trees and shrubs. These Asian plants are too aggressive and displace native plants. They also consume much scarce water in this dry environment. National laws now enable the eradication of these trees.



The left photo is of a “cattle guard”. The fence line that confines the cattle comes up to both sides of the road. The metal grate above a deep pit allows traffic to pass over without having to open and close a gate. People can walk carefully across the cattle guard. Cattle, however, get their hoofs caught or slipping in the gaps. They quickly learn the hard way to never cross a cattle guard. In the right photo Juan photographs a fake cattle guard - a set of lines painted on the highway. The cattle think it is a real cattle guard and will not pass over it. It works well on roads until the lines get worn and need to be repainted.



Arches National Park has thousands of cliffs and columns of rock. The upper left photo shows the “3 Gossips”. They are on the left side of the upper right photo as Juan and Yi look at “The Tower of Babel”. Somewhat beyond is the “Balanced Rock”. The snow-capped La Sal Mountains are in the rear.



The climb from the parking lot to Delicate Arch is a challenging ascent of 146 meters over a distance of 2.4 km. That includes this section of bare rock where the general path is marked only by piles of stones. People appear as minor spots in this image. At the top the trail is carved into a cliff side and there are no railings. Juan and Yi arrived at Delicate Arch. Its tall size is indicated by the size of the people at its base (dots above Yi’s camera). The La Sal Mountains are in the background.



As you can see, the weather was perfect for our visit. The temperature was pleasantly cool for our exercise. The visibility was excellent.



A better indication of the size of Delicate Arch is shown by the people in this telephoto view from the valley far below. The previous view was taken from among the people on the left side of this image. As we left the park the rocks were made more red by the setting sun as the nearly full moon was rising in the east.



Friday morning we went to Canyonlands National Park. Our destination was Upheaval Dome, a circular hole (see vertical view) now thought to be a meteor crater. It is nearly 5 km across and 300 m deep. The central peak rises about 230 m above the valley floor. The crater penetrates many layers of colorful rocks.



We had our picnic lunch there. Earlier at the crater rim I saw a Juniper Titmouse, a small lively bird that I had never seen before.





Before leaving Canyonlands Park we stopped at a nearly vertical cliff overlook showing the Green River in the distance. The vertical drop to the white rim is about 400 m, and the river is much below that.



On our way back to Bountiful we passed through the large unpopulated Rafael Swell. The first photo shows Yi taking pictures at its eastern side. Near the top this was their view.



Gail, Juan, Yi, and I took perhaps a thousand photos during this 3-day trip.

Ed Holroyd, 21 October 2013