

Trip 2 – Episode #19 – Big Bend National Park – Part 2

Our next excursion in Big Bend was to the Hot Springs. If you're thinking we drove to an exotic spa for a mani-pedi ... think again.



For this spa, we drove to a parking area and then walked about a half mile down this road. Again, the topography was so dramatic, and the sky so blue.



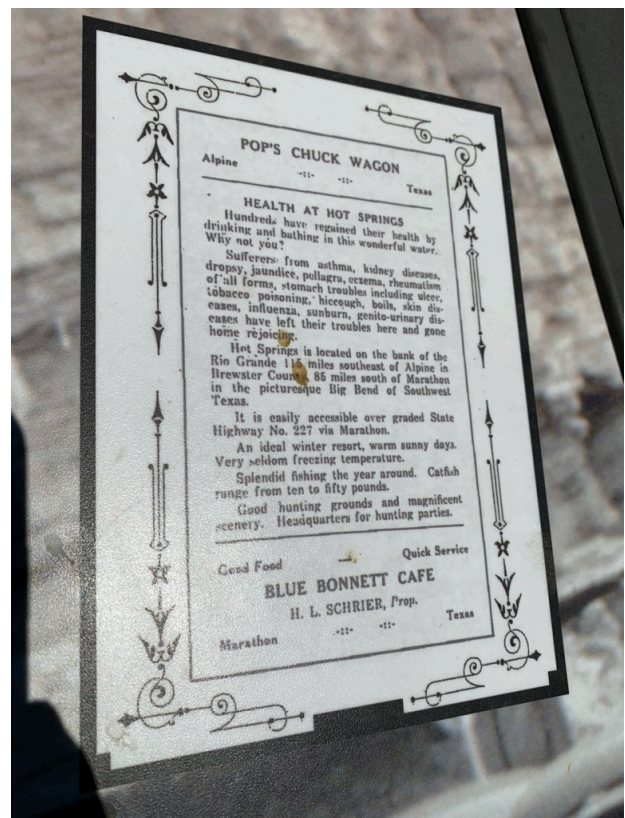
We arrived at the original Visitor Welcome Center, established in 1909 by J.O. Langford, who had contracted malaria as a child and was searching for a cure. He was in Alpine, Texas and heard someone talking about an old hot spring with medicinal waters on the Rio Grande.

Langford bought the land sight-unseen and moved here. He then built a 2-story, 20-by-20 foot limestone bathhouse, and a home for his wife and baby daughter.



Then he started promoting the area for its restorative values with ads like this, including a list of all the ailments that could be cured. Everything from dropsy to hiccoughs.

And people came!



As we walked along the path that led to the hot springs, we couldn't help thinking of the many, many miles (or kilometres) we'd travelled from Toronto, with every possible amenity. But back in the early 1900s, people would spend weeks getting there, in very uncomfortable conditions with hardly any conveniences along the way. So when they got there, they were encouraged by Langford to stay for 3 or more weeks, which people were inclined to do, because of the arduous trip they faced to get back home. (But imagine traveling that distance in those condition to treat hiccoughs!)



There were several remnants of the buildings that had been erected to house and feed the travellers who came to luxuriate in the waters.



There were also pictographs along the way, proof that Native Americans had been enjoying the hot springs for centuries before.



Like our walk the day before in the Boquillas Canyon, the landscapes were so striking.





When we finally got to the hot springs, a number of people were sitting in what was the foundation of the original bath house. And if you look across the river, you can see people sitting under a canopy. They're Mexicans, who displayed signs telling us we could cross the river and buy tacos, nachos and more handicrafts. All you had to do was wade across the Rio Grande. Another reminder of how foolish it seems to build a wall to keep the two peoples apart.



Lots of people were enjoying the springs. Some had taken a break from paddling down the river in one of the organized tours.



We didn't come prepared with our bathing suits, but we at least got to dip our feet in the hot water for a while.





Then we headed
back, and
miraculously,
neither of us had
dropsy or hiccoughs!



The wall back
was just as
beautiful.
As you can see I
had the
photographer's
version of
trigger finger.
But who could
blame me?







As always, it's amazing to see what can survive in this dry, harsh climate.





After we returned to our campground, we went for one more drive, back to the Boquillas Outlook, hoping to get a fabulous sunset. The sunset itself wasn't remarkable, but the reflections on the ridges behind us were pretty great.





It was our last night in Rio Grande Village Campground. The next day we'd drive through another huge section of Big Bend which we'd heard was even more spectacular. It was hard to imagine what the next day would bring.

