

Trip 2 – Episode #11: Life's a Beach

Having finally made our way to the Gulf of Mexico, we decided to stay there for a while. We arbitrarily picked a very small RV park a few hours down the coast in a place called Sargent Beach. There were only 7 spots and we managed to get one looking out at the water.



We met Tim, who owned the park, and for a change I remembered to take his picture!



He was quite a character. He had been a mechanical engineer, but had decided to “retire”. So now, along with running the park, he and his wife (a Venezuelan woman he met 28 years ago) run a ranch, and he started up his own online blues station which runs 24/7 day! I think he had a few other ventures as well, but I lost track.

He also told us how much the beach had changed over the years because of hurricanes.

This pier
looked bizarre
without any
access to it.
Apparently,
that was a
result of a
recent
hurricane.



It was also the explanation for the eight miles of “revetment wall” they’d built to support the beach and stop the erosion. Tim said there had literally been another couple of rows of houses in front of where his place is, but erosion had wiped them all out.



Without this barricade, the erosion would eventually continue so far, they’d lose the intercoastal waterway behind Tim’s place. The waterway carries a huge amount of boat traffic, shipping all kinds of goods from Florida all the way to Brownsville Texas – over a thousand miles.



It wasn't the loveliest beach, but I managed to get some pretty striking shots over the two days we spent there.







And walking the other way, up the beach, we discovered an interesting collection of homes, many of them evidently vacation homes, but some, according to Tim belong to people who live here year-round.



But the most interesting thing about this little beach community was the enormous bridge that was built to connect it to the mainland. According to Tim there had been a swing bridge, but it was always breaking down and slowing down the barge traffic on the intercoastal. But there's not much space on the beach side, so they couldn't build a bridge with a safe incline. Which meant that in order to span this little distance...



... they had to build this huge, double looped overpass!





As you can see from Jim's masterful pointing (he's a professional you know), it's very, very high.

To get a sense of how huge this thing is, we made a video, which is posted below. (It's pretty riveting!)



On our second evening, we crossed the bridge to find The Crab Trap Grill, one of the only restaurants still in business, and got some takeout. Didn't look like much...



But I had the grilled Barramundi, a fish I'd never had before and it was delicious. With very tasty grilled green beans. Yum! (Sorry, was too busy eating to take pics.)

On the other side of the intercoastal, there was quite a colourful community which Tim described as "like Venice". Almost all the homes back onto canals.



Also some colourful characters, apparently...



Next stop ... the town of Rockport, in Aransas county, just north of Corpus Christi.

We stayed in the Ancient Oaks RV Park, where we discovered that people like us were considered “Winter Texans.”



Although it wasn't on the beach, we were able to drive a short distance and spend a good portion of the day on this gorgeous beach with almost nobody else!





One of the interesting things that happened at the RV park was that I kept hearing flocks of birds flying overhead making a strange whistling sound. When I looked it up, I discovered they were “whistling ducks”. Never heard of such a thing! Unfortunately I didn’t get close enough to them to get a good photo, so I stole this one:



But at the park, they had a duck pond, and one morning, I came upon a flock of them, causing them to fly. I'll post the video at the end of this so you can hear what whistling ducks sound like.

By this time, it was getting very close to Christmas and we hadn't figured out where we were going to spend it. So ... we just kept driving south.

And we got to South Padre Island, which is just off the coast of Corpus Christi. After checking out a couple of places, we settled on Padre Balli Park. It was right next to a beach that went on and on for miles. And what we discovered was that we could actually drive Charles right onto the beach.

This was a dream we'd always had, but it was also kind of scary. Which explains Jim's look of trepidation.



But there were many, many others doing the same thing, and so ...



Although we could have stayed there overnight, we chose to stay in the RV park, hooked up to power and water. But it was great to be on the beach for part of the day, and not have to worry that we might have forgotten something.



We ran into some interesting characters, on the beach and in the park. This woman stopped and chatted. She's fostering this dog, who didn't want to follow her anymore after he found out we had Milkbones.



This family obviously loves getting into the Christmas spirit.



And these people travel with their own inflatable hot tub.



On Christmas Eve, because there was nothing traditional about this Christmas, we decided to go to a Texas BBQ spot for a late lunch.



We were the only ones there, but we ate on the patio, happy to be outdoors. And the patio was ... interesting.

We had a good traditional Christmas Eve meal of pulled pork and sweet potato fries.

And Oh Holy Corona.



We got a lovely
Christmas Eve
sunset.



With our Christmas tree lit, and surrounded by cotton snow (a cotton ball I picked up beside a cotton field in Mississippi) we watched Love Actually. Does it get more Chirstmassy than that?



Christmas morning we gathered 'round the tree again and had a nice pancake brunch, tried to connect with friends and family as much as wifi would allow and then went back to the beach for one last walk. It was fun to see all the families enjoying the beach.



A delicious if not very traditional Christmas dinner of lamb, grilled on the barbecue, and our day was complete. We were feeling very, very fortunate indeed.

