

Trip 2 – Episode #18 – Big Bend National Park – Part 1

Back when we were in New Iberia Louisiana (which seems like ages ago), we met a fellow traveller, Jeannie Eichler from Arkansas. When I asked her for suggestions of where we should go, she highly recommended Big Bend National Park in Texas. We may have discovered this park anyway, but I'm SO glad Jeannie told us about it.



Big Bend is in the southwestern part of Texas, right up against the border with Mexico. It's over 1200 square miles and we were able to explore a lot of it – mostly by driving, but we did some “hikes”. There are a few campgrounds in the park, but most of them are for “dry camping” which means no services. We'd had some issues in the past few days and felt we needed to be plugged in. So the only park we could go to was in the extreme south tip of the park, right on the Rio Grande River, with Mexico on the other side.



The drive there was spectacular. And it continued to be spectacular for the four days that we spent there. As you can imagine, I took dozens of photos. I'll try to cull the best. These are some views during our drive to the campground.





I couldn't get over these pink cacti. Everywhere we looked, the colour scheme was brown, ochre, green, sage. And then suddenly there would be a pink cactus. It seemed so out of place.







On the other side of this tunnel we had an option to stop and walk to a lookout to see the Rio Grande. It would be our first sighting of the famous river, so of course we walked to the lookout.





Not exactly sure where the Rio Grande is, but it was a lovely view.



And, looking back from there, we got a great view of Charles looking tiny beneath that massive peak.



As we continued toward our campground, we had no idea that this magnificent ridge ahead of us would be part of our view for the next four days.



We had booked into what was called the Rio Grande Village Campground. The “Village” was a store with minimal supplies, and of course there were no stores for miles.

The only wifi or cell service was outside the office, so we took regular walks to check in or send emails, and there was always a cluster of people standing outside, staring at their phones or calling family or friends to let them know they were alive and safe. But we were not exactly roughing it and we spent the next four days happily exploring that area of Big Bend.



Looking in either direction, we saw those sharp vertical ridges. Sometimes illuminated by the setting sun.





Our first venture was out to Boquillas Canyon Overlook, which was perched high over the Rio Grande River. It's pretty mind-bending to realize that on the other side of that river – not a great distance – is Mexico. You know, the country full of people that America is trying keep out by constructing miles and miles of walls.



We could see people across the river, some on horseback, some with little rowboats. They obviously can and do go back and forth quite easily. And when we got to the overlook, we saw why.



There were several displays of trinkets and pieces of art that Mexicans had laid out, with jars and cans for you to deposit money if you wanted to buy anything.



One evening when we were there to watch the sunset, we watched a young Mexican man cross the river in a rowboat, climb up the hill, collect his wares and money, go back down the hill, cross the river in a boat and ride his horse off toward home.



Handwritten notes explained that they were suffering because of the lack of tourism and this was the only way they could earn any money. I bought one of these cute roadrunners.



Our next outing was to Boquillas Canyon, which was one of the most spectacular walks we've done. It might even qualify as a hike. We had to climb up a bit before descending down to the river level, where we walked between massive cliffs. Just breathtaking. And again, we lucked out with the bluest of blue skies.



Here again we met
Mexicans who were
selling their wares. As
we neared the canyon,
we could hear the
echoes of someone
singing. It turned out
to be a Mexican elder
who offered to sing
for cash.



As we descended and neared the canyon, we were overwhelmed by its magnitude. If you look closely you can see other hikers ahead of us and you get a sense of the size of those cliffs.









There were some rockier parts on the trail, but we followed it as far as it went.



And we met up with this couple, one of whom decided she wanted to walk to Mexico.



The walk back was, of course, just as breathtaking.







Jim is naturally chuffed that we finished such an amazing hike. But I also wanted him to pose in front of these Pampas Grasses so you could get a size relationship. They're so handsome. (As is Jim of course.)