

Trip 2 – Episode #22 – And Now For Something Completely Different – Part 3

After Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, we planned to head toward Tucson. Most guidebooks told us to go to Hwy 10 and head west.

But we were trying to avoid main thoroughfares like Hwy 10. We totally ignored the recommendations and made our own way, partly with the help of our 100 Drives book from sister-in-law Jayne, and partly based on things we found along the way that sounded (and were!) interesting.

First, we headed toward Silver City, New Mexico, which, on the map, seemed like a simple enough trip.



When we saw this sign, we didn't realize that the decision to go to Silver City carried some risks. And in fact, the arrow toward Deming was our last chance to change our mind. The next signs we saw made us wonder about our decision.



And then we rounded a bend and saw this off in the distance:



It had been a long time since we'd seen snow-capped mountains and we weren't really sure how challenging the journey might be. As it turned out it was thrilling but not treacherous. There were lots of twists and turns and ups and downs, but there were also some spectacular views.



As we got higher into the mountains and officially entered Gila National Forest, we started to see evidence that the roads had actually been snowplowed.



There wasn't really a lot of snow. Just enough to make the views breathtaking.



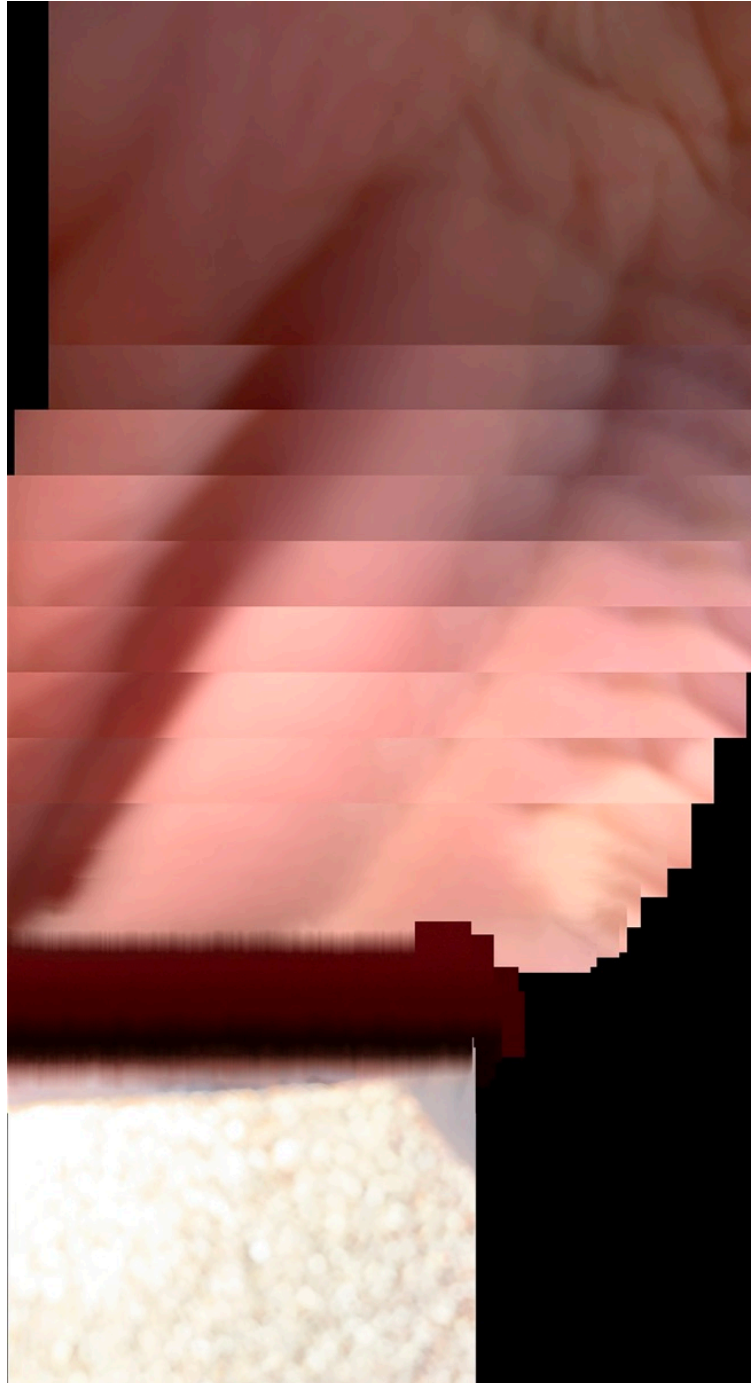




I think this was about the highest point. From here on, there were still lots of twists and vistas but less and less snow.



By the way, in case you're wondering, this is what it looks like when your phone falls out of your hand.



Fortunately, the screen protector that Michael at iRepair on the Danforth insisted on installing on my phone did its job, and I was able to continue taking pictures. Whew!

As a result, I was able to continue taking photos like this...





Finally we made it to Silver City, which was still pretty high up.



Once again, we were surprised by another small town with a lot of character.







This was a cool square in town offering a common area for people to eat the meals they'd picked up at a variety of eateries around the square.

We were there on a Wednesday, so a lot of them were closed (we suspected hours had been reduced because of COVID) but it was still nice.



Walking through town, we passed this window, which turned out to be the local radio station. We liked what they had to say.



Although many of the stores were closed, there was a nice vibe to the town. And we discovered that they had their own Riverwalk – called the Big Ditch.





We also found a fun used book/CD/DVD store whose owner was a former stand-up comic. He was hilarious and his sales technique obviously worked.



We said goodbye to Silver City (and it said goodbye to us)...



And we headed off toward the main reason we had taken this route.



I mean, really. If there's a ghost town called Shakespeare, don't we HAVE to go there?

We had intended to just do a “self-guided” tour, but it turned out that this was private property, and Ian, the young man who greeted us, explained that if we wanted to explore the grounds, we would have to pay for it – even if we didn’t want the full tour. So we did an abbreviated tour with him, which was quite fascinating.



Shakespeare wasn’t always called Shakespeare. Its previous names had been decided by people who had discovered silver and other potentially valuable minerals in the area. In 1879, a Brit named Boyle staked some claims and renamed it Shakespeare, partly because he was a fan of the Bard and partly because he wanted to deflect bad press about past frauds in the area.

When the town didn't deliver on the minerals, and when the new railroad didn't go through Shakespeare, the town declined. In 1935, Frank and Rita Hill purchased the town and buildings for a ranch. Their daughter, Janaloo, was an actress who had a career, touring throughout the States, but when her father was declining, she went back home to help the family and the town. She created quite a community, teaching locals and putting together shows. But the area continued its decline, and the people who own it now are trying to restore its history.

Our biggest surprise came when we walked up to the first building, which had been built by the Hill family. From the outside you would never guess what was inside.



Clearly Janaloo had created a real rehearsal space and the community had enjoyed the thrill of professionally produced shows. Maybe not Shakespearean, but certainly with some real polish.



The rest of the “ghost town” was filled relics of an earlier period, when the only goal for those who moved there was to strike it rich.



Ian told us about the town’s past and also about their plans to restore its history. They’ve got a big job ahead of them!



Some of the buildings are somewhat restored but others are going to require a lot of work.



Apparently,
there were
actual hangings
in this room.
But not many.



This building, which was one of the best restored, was where prospectors would take their findings and have them weighed and valued.



It's definitely a work in progress, but the people who now own it are dedicated to restoring it and telling the story of this interesting part of New Mexico's history.



After our tour of Shakespeare Ghost Town, we were ready to “exeunt” to our next adventure down the road...

