

Trip 2 – Episode # 45 – States of Wonder.

After our Route 66 experience, I guess we were a little jaded. During the next few days, we found ourselves in a few different states – physically and mentally.

Often, as we looked around us, we were in a state of wonder, awed by the majesty of the land, the sky and the water we drove by. At other times, the things we saw caused a different state of wonder: Wondering why.

As we drove toward the border between California and Arizona, we were awed by the skies, which looked they were brewing a huge storm. But it never amounted to anything – where we were anyway.



We had booked a place in Needles, California, which is across the river from Arizona. When we got to the campground, we wondered if there was a horrific fire. It turned out to be a very vibrant sunset.



It was a nice enough campground. But the view across the river suggested to us that Arizona was much more developed than Needles was.



Needles is one of those places that makes you wonder what the heck is going on in America.

It's a town of 5000 people, and there is not a single grocery store where people can buy fresh produce, meat or any kind of real food. We went into one of the only convenience stores around, which offered the standard array of snack food. I asked the saleswoman where the closest grocery store was and she said there was a Walmart, 11 miles away, across the river, in Arizona. She admitted that it made it hard for people who lived in Needles and didn't have a car.

No kidding.

There were a few places that sold "Fresh Jerky". (I wondered what the coyote and the roadrunner had to do with jerky. Maybe the roadrunner is fresh and the coyote is a jerk?)



Another woman I talked to commented that Needles had a few exclusive golf clubs with restaurants, and numerous "dispensaries" where you could buy dope, but no place where you could buy groceries.

It wasn't till sometime later that I figured it out. There probably *were* grocery stores in Needles ... until the Walmart opened 11 miles away, in another state. Then people (who had cars) started doing all their shopping there, putting their local grocers out of business.

It makes you wonder.

Not only is Needles just across the river from Arizona, it's also just down the highway from Nevada. So the next day, we set out on a tri-state journey. In less than half an hour, we were in another state.



Unlike where we'd been, it was quite mountainous.



And, despite the fact that Laughlin, the first town we came to, is not much bigger than Needles, it has several grocery stores.

Here's Jim pointing out the one we went to.



But here's what else Laughlin has:



These are all hotels. And the reason Laughlin has all these huge glitzy hotels is ...

They have casinos! This is Nevada after all. So casinos = money = places to buy food.



It makes you wonder.

We kept on driving.



All we had to do was drive across a bridge and we were in Arizona.



We were intrigued to check out a place we'd read about. On another drivable segment of the historic Route 66, was Oatman, a former mining town, now a "ghost town".

Having been let down by a few other so-called ghost towns, we almost gave it a pass. But then we read about the wild burros that would supposedly come into town during the day to get treats from the tourists, and then return to the mountains in the evenings. It seemed worth the trip. So the next morning, we headed out. It was an interesting drive.





After several miles, we saw a sign that we were inclined to ignore. We'd seen so many signs like this before, telling us to be on the lookout for animals we would never see.



But then, as we rounded a bend ...



We headed into town and discovered a bit more about the story behind the wild burros.



And sure enough, when we got into town, there they were.





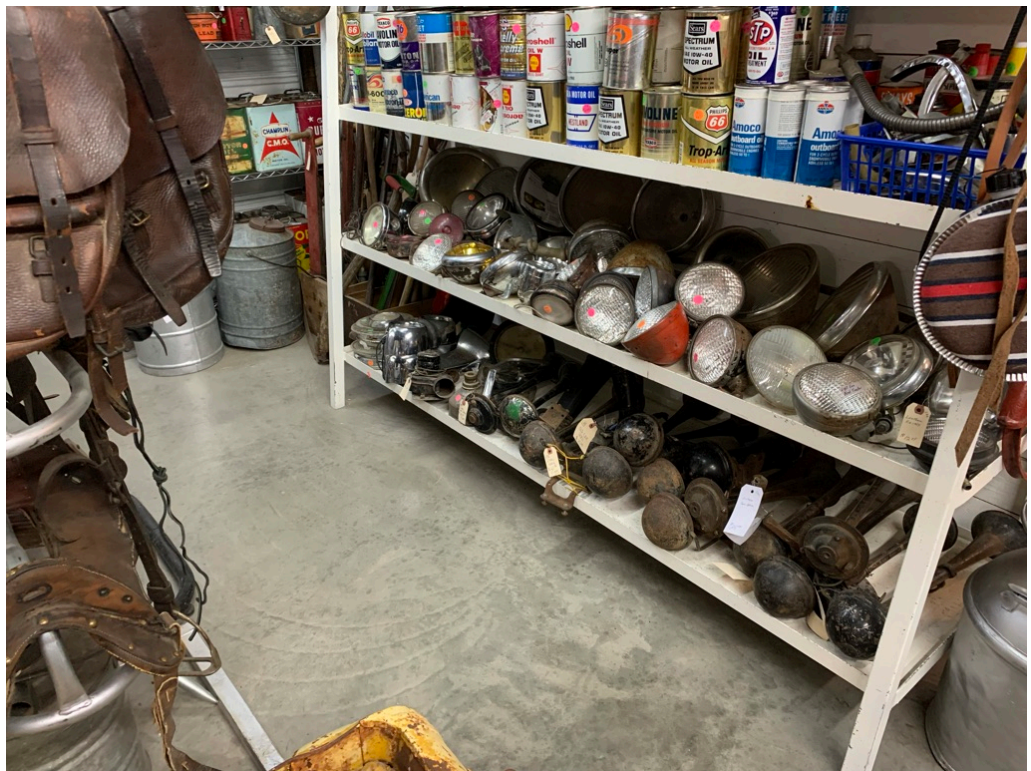
Despite the warnings about getting close to the burros, tourists could buy food pellets for them. But the burros were obviously bored with that stuff. The road was littered with pellets they'd spit out. I had come prepared with carrots, so I was quite popular.



That was the fun part of Oatman. Aside from the burros, they had some typical touristy shops, but also a few that weren't exactly typical.

There aren't too many places where, while you're flipping through old LPs, you can also peruse a selection of wagon wheels, rifles, mounted deer antlers, saddle bags and headlamps.





There were a couple of places that kept to the theme of the old west mining town, with a few twists.





And there were shops that sold stuff that had nothing to do with mining ... or reality.



It makes you wonder.

We decided to move on. In Oatman, we had seen this sign:



We hadn't noticed the road being particularly curvy on the way there, so we realized that as we continued on, we should expect a number of curves. And we found them.



However, it wasn't nearly as curvy as some of the roads we'd already driven - and that we still had ahead of us.

In a while, we were in real desert land again.



Strangely, the dry desert was broken up by sightings of the mighty Colorado River.



But it turned out that wasn't the strangest thing in this leg of our travels.

Ahead was Lake Havasu City, which has its own, odd claim to fame.



Yes, this town, in the middle of the desert is the place where the London Bridge ended up. Of course, we had to drive across it didn't we?

First, we found a spot where we could actually see it. Yup, there it is.



This is what it looks like when you drive across.



This is what it looks like from the bridge.



And we couldn't help wondering, "Why? Why is this bridge here instead of in London. and why are we driving across it?" But of course the answer is: The reason it's there is that people like us will go to Lake Havasu and drive across it. (At least we didn't have to pay to drive it!)

We continued on our way, amazed, as we have so often been, at how the terrain and landscapes can change with every bend in the road. These next five photos were taken within a little over ten minutes of driving.







Our stop that night was at Blythe, our last night in California.

Once again, we were on the Colorado River, looking across at Arizona. It was quite lovely at sunset.





Other than that, the campsite's most interesting feature was the sign above the laundry room.



Also, at one point, I asked another camper if she knew where the recycling bin was. She said she had no idea. Then she smiled and said, without any hint of embarrassment, "We don't recycle."

It makes you wonder.