

## Trip 4 – Episode #5: Welcome to Colorful Colorado, Part 2

Right from the start, when we left Denver, we could see it was going to be a beautiful day for a drive. And what a drive it was.

At our brunch, our friend Chandler Burton gave us a number of tips about where we might go during our brief time in Colorado. His best was to take Hwy 285 out of Denver. It was fabulous.

On our way out of town, we started seeing all kinds of interesting red rocks. We had heard about the Red Rocks Amphitheatre and tried to find it, but never did. However, there were lots of interesting rock formations.





This one had a snake-like sculpture on top. And down below, if you look very closely there's a sign that says "Beware Rattlesnakes". Not sure if it's coincidence or not.



Soon we could see snow on mountaintops off in the distance. Which was a little worrying, mostly because we didn't know how high we'd be climbing.







Along with the beautiful scenery, there were some interesting signs...







We also couldn't resist checking out one roadside stop we'd read about. I mean, really, when you're told you can see a giant hotdog just off the highway, you have to stop, don't you? Well, *we* do. And after a bit of searching, near Bailey Colorado, we found it.





The 12.8-meter (42-foot) long wiener resting on a 10.7-meter (35-foot) bun, is actually a hot dog stand. The Coney Island Boardwalk apparently first opened in Denver in 1966 and has had a few moves in its history.



We met the newest owner, who was excited about the new life and location for his giant hot dog stand. Here he is taking a photo of the happy little stream right beside his new location.





It really is a nice location.





We didn't sample the product, it being a bit early in the day, but maybe next time. If it's still there.

We continued on Hwy 285, following that happy little stream for quite a long way.



Until we turned around one bend and suddenly ...





It was a bit of a shock to see that much snow, but just as quickly, we were out of it.













And although they weren't playing, we did see antelope, at home on the range.







Chandler had suggested we check out Buena Vista, which was a nice little town. We found a great lunch restaurant called the Simple Eatery & Spoon (in the former State Highway Department building).











And then we took in a few bueno vistas.









Then we got back on 285 and headed toward our next stopover place. The drive continued to be spectacular at almost every turn.











Our campground was a KOA in Salida (pronounced Sal-eye-da). We've stayed in a number of KOAs and they're generally pretty reliable, although a little more expensive than others. This one had a very helpful person in the office, which was much appreciated.

But the views....







It was pretty great *before* the sun set, but then...







At one point, I looked the other way to see how the light was reflecting to the east, and that's when I saw the full moon rising at the same time as the sun was setting!





No matter where I looked it was spectacular.





The next morning, we set off bright and early (for us) and drove south, following the Arkansas River as it wound through the mountains. It was a great drive.

We had no idea there *was* an Arkansas River and we followed it for miles. (Turns out it goes all the way from northern Colorado to Arkansas, where it empties into the Mississippi. Who knew?)









Eventually, we drove away from the river, toward the town of Cañon City (so it's pronounced Canyon).





And that was our next destination. For one main reason...



Yes, there's a train called the Royal Gorge, which somebody was quite excited about.





As the name suggests, the train winds its way through a gorge, created by the Arkansas River, and it's very scenic. Along with providing a nice dining car, it also offered an open air car, so we could really see the gorge and the water.













Along the route, we passed Santa's Village which pleased some of the kids.





Other kids  
were just  
happy to be  
on a train. In  
a gorge.



To get a better sense of  
what it was like to travel  
through the gorge, check  
out Jim's video, which is  
attached along with this  
blog.









One of the attractions was the walking ridge that spans the gorge at one point.



There was also a gondola that crossed over the gorge.





We were quite happy with the views we got down by the river.













Despite the fact that it was November 8<sup>th</sup>, there were vivid fall colours.





We got to the end of the line, and the train reversed all the way back through the gorge, so we got a slightly different view. But we seized the opportunity to take a break. Jim couldn't resist a drink with bacon vodka. I could.



All in all, it was an amazing trip to the gorge, and then through it on the train.

Although we would love to have stayed in Colorado longer, and seen more of its spectacular scenery, the weather forecasts promised lows of minus 6 to minus 12C.

So, as Jim would say, we decided it was time to “turn left” (head south). And so we did. Toward New Mexico.