

Trip 4 – Episode # 6: We'll Always Remember New Mexico

When I last wrote, way back in December, we had just finished our “gorgeous” ride on the Royal Gorge Train in Colorado. We had hoped to stay in Colorado longer, but a deep freeze was forecast, so we headed south into New Mexico. Our goal was to get to the California coast and up to the redwood forests before we flew home for Christmas. Unfortunately, that meant we couldn't stay in some places as long as we would've liked. And then ... there were some places we had to stay longer than we wanted.



Once again, we were in desert country, which has its own beauty. For a while.



You can tell you've been driving through the desert when ...



Yup that's tumbleweed.

We had heard that Taos was an interesting place and had wanted to go there during our last trip, but it was too cold.

This time, we were there early enough, and it looked like a place worth visiting longer, but we just did a drive-through, eager to keep going south.





Santa Fe was another place we'd wanted to go, and after driving through, we know we'd really like to come and stay for a while. So many interesting buildings, so colourful and so much art!









We definitely need to go back to Santa Fe and say a while!

Our next stop was Truth Or Consequences, New Mexico. Yes, that's really what it's called. They changed it as part of a publicity stunt for the radio show of the same name back in the 60s. It's known, by the locals, as T or C.

We stayed there last year and enjoyed it, mostly because we stayed in a great campsite that had hot spring pools right on the Rio Grande. But it's also a quirky, fun little town with interesting shops and restaurants. And a bookstore jampacked with books we'll never have time to read.





The place we stayed in wasn't quite as elegant as our first campsite, but it was kind of funky and had hot tubs that we took advantage of.



What we didn't realize was that we were about to face Truth AND Consequences.

Before hitting the road, we stopped to get gas. Actually the TRUTH is we stopped to get diesel, but instead, one of us put in gas instead. We had read of other RVers who had made this mistake and had suffered dire CONSEQUENCES – like having to replace the entire engine.

Fortunately, the mistake was recognized fairly quickly, and the decision was made to fill the rest of the tank with diesel. What we probably should have done was find someone to empty the tank and flush it out there and then. But it was a Saturday and we weren't sure where we'd find someone to do this in Truth or Consequences. So, we crossed our fingers (always a big help) and headed south.



For the first while, everything was fine. We drove through the town of Hatch, which we'd been through before. It's known for its huge annual chile festival, which they take very seriously.



It's also famous for its collection of giant commercial characters which loom over shops and restaurants all over town.



We continued on our way, feeling pretty fortunate that Charles seemed to be handling the combination of gas and diesel quite well.

And then ... he coughed. And a little while later, he coughed again. And then he started coughing regularly, and we could only get him up to about 45 mph. Jim was driving on the shoulder to keep from obstructing any traffic that came along.

But there wasn't much traffic.

We were somewhere around here:



The nearest town was Demming, New Mexico. We'd never heard of Demming, but the more Charles coughed, the more we looked forward to getting there.

For reference, this is where Demming is:



It was about noon when we got to Demming. It was Saturday. No service station was open. So, we found a campground, and Charles coughed to a stop. We didn't dare start him up again until we could get an appointment at a service station.

It was not the most glamorous place. This is the owner's dog and he represents the campground quite well.



But we were glad to have a place to stay. And worried about what might come next. I had an all-day zoom on Monday, so we weren't able to take Charles in till Tuesday. And during all that time, we didn't know if we'd destroyed his engine. Would it have to be replaced? Would he start again or would he have to be towed to the service station? If the engine did have to be replaced, would anyone in Demming even know how to do that? And how long would it take to get the parts required? Would we have to stay in Demming for weeks?

It was a really long three days.

But on Tuesday morning, we found a place that would take us.

The service guy flushed the engine out and said everything was okay. It turns out the smartest thing we did (after doing a really dumb thing) was to fill the rest of the tank with diesel, which neutralized the effect of the gas in the engine.

Whew!



While Charles was being flushed, we roamed around Demming a bit, had breakfast in a nice coffee shop, and discovered that there were some interesting sites in town.





After thanking the service guy profusely, we jumped in and aimed Charles west. We were happy to see this sign.



And since that day, whenever we have any problem or challenge, we say, "At least we're not in Demming."

As a reminder, for Christmas I had this sweatshirt made for Jim.

