

Earl's Diary - Tuesday - February 11, 2014

Dear Loyal Readers,

This is my first full day here at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. I took time to explore the area and learn its history over the next three days.

First of all, if you look at a map (you know, those paper things used before GPS), the village of Borrego Springs is completely surrounded by the state park. You notice they call it a "village" and not a town. The Village of Borrego Springs is part of San Diego County. The village was here long before the state park was commissioned in 1932. Since that time the state has worked to solve problems with private inholdings that have blocked access to many key areas of the park. With over 634,000 acres, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park makes up over half of the real estate of the entire State Park System.

This morning I spent time looking over the camp ground and a stop at the Visitor Center. The camp ground is certainly a desert environment. The Palm Canyon Camp Ground has one loop that has full hookups. Another loop has dry camping.



The Peanut is here to welcome you to the park. We are camped in the full hookup section. Notice the paved roads and pads. Those pads are pull through and long enough for the largest "stickies".

All the dry sites had shade ramadas over the table areas. Water faucets were near by.

Some sites have wall structures as well as shade.



In the dry camping section even the outhouses are camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding area. I did have to take a peek inside. They weren't pit toilets. They actually had flush toilets!

A view looking up Palm Canyon





An A/C ???

The full hookup loop was full of all sizes of “stickies”. Well, not all stickies. I did notice one site had a 17 foot Bigfoot. A couple of nights tent trailers also took advantage of the water and electric. Oh look, there’s an R Pod!



We have a good view of the valley below.



Look at all the greenery down there. I wonder what that is? To find out, read my next installment.



The Borrego Valley is the westernmost extent of the great southwestern geographical region known as the Sonoran Desert. Borrego Springs is situated on the valley floor within a diverse variety of desert flora and fauna. One of the iconic species found within the Borrego Springs area is the California Fan Palm. This is the only palm native to the western United States.



The Visitor Center even blends in with the surrounding area. Their native plants were all identified.



Mohave Yucca



Desert Ironwood



Hedgehog Cactus



Blue Palo Verde - Some desert plants photosynthesize without leaves. These shrubs and trees have chlorophyll in their green bark.



Something unnamed - notice the flowers growing on the end of dead looking stems



This creosote bush was receiving enough water. Notice the yellow flowers.



The bees were active on these yellow flowers. I finally got one to stop for a moment while I snapped its picture.

All Kinds of Chollas - I would not like getting stuck with any of these!



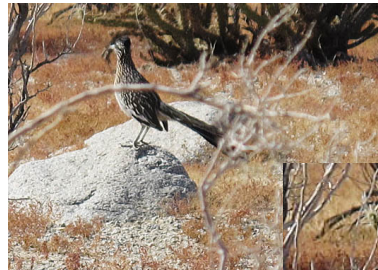
Teddy Bear Cholla



Diamond Cholla



Ganders Cholla



Ocotillo - This plant was also getting enough water. Notice the small leaves on the stems.

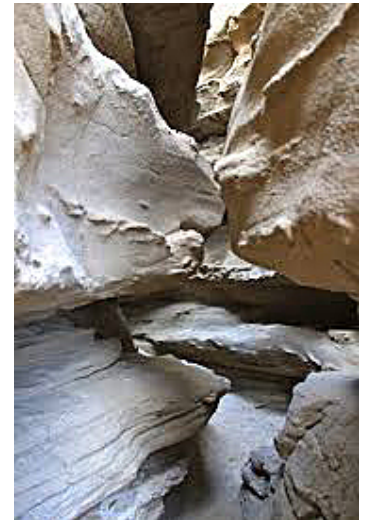
I tried playing Wiley Coyote with a roadrunner. I tried skillfully to creep up on him (or her) to take the picture. It wasn't having any part of that. I would just get the camera ready and it would dash behind a bush, or rush a distance away. However, I persevered and after a 15 minute chase I finally got what I was looking for. Very shortly after I snapped this picture, RR was off and running again. I thought I heard a "peep peep" as he dashed away. He thought he had won but I got my photo!

One of the suggested areas to visit was Slot Canyon. I was eager to find this sight. I had to drive out of the park and on to the main highway. It was supposed to be easy to find the dirt road to the left. Just look for the sign that says "Butte Pass Road", I was told. Merrily I went sailing down the road looking for the sign. After 5 miles I decided I hadn't looked hard enough. Making a U turn I headed back. About a mile from where I turned on the main road I saw the sign. Now you would think they would have the sign no matter whether you were traveling east OR west. NOT!



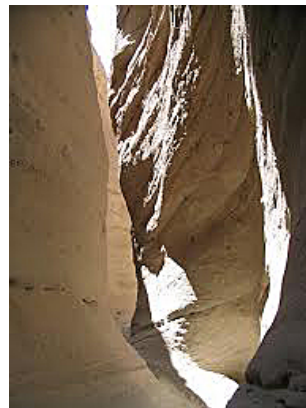
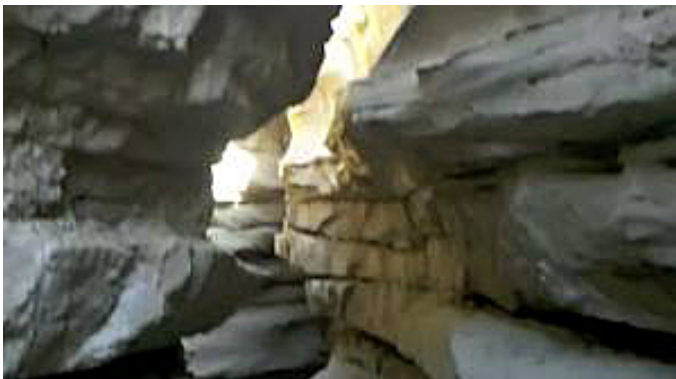
I turned on the dirt road (actually it was mostly packed sand) and bumped along for two miles until I came to the parking area. I started down toward the bottom of the wash. Soon I discovered I was NOT equipped to make such a walk. Disappointed I returned to my truck to head back those 2 bumpy miles.

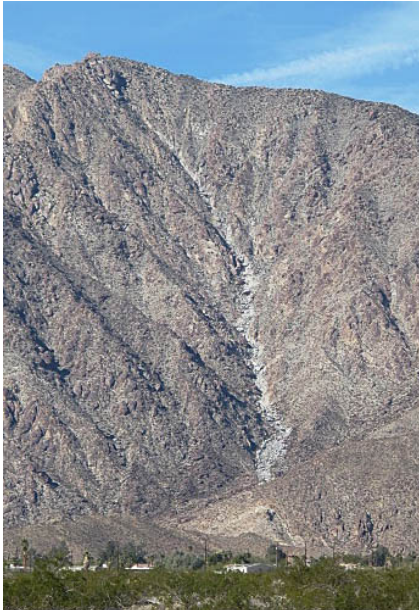
Not to be dissuaded to see the Slot Canyon, I found the following pictures on the internet. So - - I invite you to come along with me to see the sights that I had missed in person!



Slot Canyon is an unmaintained trail off a sand road, far from most visitor traffic. Here, flash floods formed a breathtaking slot canyon. At points, forty-foot high walls arch above a foot-wide canyon floor. Although the desert is defined by aridity, intense rain events formed the landscape. Sudden pulses of water from monsoon events carve the stone and sand into ridge and canyon.

Canyon walls reveal banks undercut by the propulsive, abrasive mix of water and sediment. Just as water erodes away weak layers of the canyon wall, it also deposits other material upon protuberances. Large, intricately patterned mud deposits are a frequent sight on the canyon walls.





I thought this was an interesting sight. The erosion starts at the very top of the mountain and flows clear to the base.

Faulting, flooding, gravity and wind are sculpting the earth. The story is written in the rocks. Different eras of geologic history are recorded here in the park.



Hard rock, soft rock. When this rock was formed, it had pockets of softer material here and there. Over time, rain and wind removed the softer rock, leaving the tiny caves.



There are thousands of faults like this one. The rounded edges of the contact zone and the different kinds of rock material on each side give it away.



This rock was created when forces compressed and warped mud and sand layers. You can notice how the layers in the middle of this photo have been turned vertical.

They say that half the park is after dark. The remoteness from big cities allows a cosmic show featuring the night sky. The night skies are some of the best in southern California. The dry climate and lack of artificial city lights produce a darkness where stars sparkle and planets shine.

My time here was during the (almost) full moon cycle. The moonlight lit up the area to a surreal level. A person could sit outside and just enjoy the quiet solitude. I'm sorry, folks, it was too dark to take photos. I will just have to sit here and soak it all in for you!

I have spent the last three days exploring most of the immediate area of the park and the surrounded village of Borrego Springs. Alas, my time here in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is coming to an end. It has been most educational and fun. Thanks for coming along with me on this adventure. - - Earl