The reason for the trip was a graduation in Ft. Collins, CO; graduating as a DVM was someone’s dream come true: wonderful! I added some sightseeing: Bisti Bisti, Mesa Verde, the Grand Dunes, Nine Mile Canyon, and Capitol Reef NP.

I started on this trip just before noon on a Monday. From Apache Junction, it went to Globe, then through the Salt River Canyon, Show Low (a name derived from a famous poker game; now a town that is quite LDS), Taylor (which prides itself on being founded before Snowflake), Snowflake (founded by Erastus Snow and William Flake), Holbrook (a tough town on route 66), and Gallup. I love this part of the world: having been here many times, it doesn’t cease to amaze me: endless skies and canyons and painted desert!
The next morning, I briefly visited Rehoboth where the Navajo Summer Program had had meetings at the Christian Reformed school. More religious affiliations than one has ever heard of dot the Navajo Reservation! The trip then went along I40 to Thoreau and north on 371, past the access road to Chaco Canyon, to the Bisti Bisti Wilderness. I had seen it on maps and had seen pictures and it was quite spectacular in places but then so is so much of this area. Bisti Bisti is featured as the Badlands of NM: it isn’t as vast as the Badlands of SD but more remote!

To Bisti Bisti, a well graded road

Impressive formations!

After Bisti, I went to Farmington (lots of oil and gas exploration but not as bad as a few years ago) and then to Shiprock and Cortes. The landscape, from Shiprock North, is just stunning. The next destination was Mesa Verde NP, inhabited between 600 CE – 1300 CE by Ancestral Pueblo Indians. The latter term
reflects a recent shift from thinking the ‘Anasazi’ disappeared to one that thinks their descendants are the Native American people that live in this region now.
Spruce Tree House, with 130 rooms and eight kivas, whose alcove has now become unstable.

Mesa Verde has two main roads, to Wetherill Mesa and to Chapin Mesa. I had been on the latter 25 years ago; with the many fires, the views have changed a lot. And before, you could just walk to cliff dwellings where now you need a tour. I hadn’t been on Wetherill Mesa before which is more secluded.

After Mesa Verde, the trip went to Alamosa and further, on the 160 East. I had hoped to visit the archeological site at Chimney Rock but it was closed. The people who lived here would have been related to those in Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde.

There’s a lot of agriculture in Colorado, mostly with irrigation from the Colorado and other rivers. Irrigation is the reason one sees round green circles from a plane window. The website here has lots of information on the crops grown. I should have stopped to take a proper picture but the below picture on the left is from my car window.
From there, I went to the Great Sand Dunes NP where the sand has eroded from the mountains. The views from a distance are perhaps the most impressive. There are warnings not to remove one’s shoes in summer because the sand’s temperature can reach 150 F (66 C). The mountains behind the Park are the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, a reminder how much of Colorado was Spanish.

After the dunes, there is lots more agricultural activity in Hooper, Moffat, etc. I had a wonderful lunch in Poncha Springs, and below are some not very extraordinary picture of Poncha.
After that, it was on to Leadville, a mining town, joining the I70 at Frisco, getting off at Georgetown, and then to Empire, Tabernash, and Granby, where I stayed for the night. Lots of snow!

The next morning, I wanted to cut across the Rocky Mountain NP to Estes Park and to Loveland/Ft Collins. The road was closed due to bad weather the week before, however. I had been through the park in 1999 and it is really beautiful.

So, I went back the same roads (across the same passes) and then through West Denver without having memorized that part of the map in my head. That took some extra time but fortunately you can always see the mountains so you know the basic direction. North of Denver are interesting towns: Longmont,
Loveland, and Ft. Collins all have old cores. This was an area of farming, e.g. sugar beet farming. Loveland is famous for remailing Valentine’s cards; see [here](#), and has lots of art, museums and sculpture.

On the way back, I thought that going on the I25 to Denver would be the easiest but that road had major slow-downs, even though it was a Saturday afternoon. Then West on Interstate 70 (winding and with elevation change) to stay overnight in Grand Junction. From Grand Junction on, the landscape was fascinating the entire time. I was so happy to back in the real SW.
The main reason to go this far north and west was to visit Nine Mile Canyon. You turn north at the Chevrons Station in Wellington. I had first seen a reference to Nine Mile Canyon in Backpacker Magazine and then found it on a map and discovered a great website which I used to find the rock art. Some of it is similar to that in Arizona but some (the filled in humans) is not. This art was created by Fremont Indians and their creative high point was 700 – 1250 CE. Like the Mesa Verde and other Ancestral People, they have probably been absorbed into later groups.
By the entrance to Harmon Canyon (mile 33.8), there are so many!
The canyon is so beautiful; my pictures don’t do it justice. Cows prefer the road; which is sometimes fatal to them (as I witnessed on 261 in Utah, where a truck collided with two).
Big Buffalo site:

To its right:
The Great Hunt panel is special, so well preserved!
And to its right, there are fainter glyphs.

Then back to Wellington and Price and to Loa and to the biggest surprise: Capitol Reef NP! How dramatic!
There were even some petroglyphs, very similar to the ones in Nine Mile Canyon! And then some more views.
After Capitol Reef, I spent the night in Hanksville and then went on through the Glen Canyon area, the Bears Ears, Valley of the Gods, Monument Valley etc. This part is THE BEST.
And then Kayenta, Tuba City, brunch in Cameron, Flagstaff and back home, after 2550 miles!