Weekend to Northern Arizona – Elly – June 2017

I had wanted to go on a Hopi Petroglyph Trail but the two guides I contacted weren’t too interested so then I saw the Arizona Highways’ June edition that had the North Rim as the scenic drive of the month and decided to go to the recommended places and a few others. I went via Payson, Strawberry, and Clint’s Well to Flagstaff and then on the 89 towards Page and at Bitter Spring on to the 89A to Marble Canyon where I was spending the night.

The construction of the Glen Canyon Dam just above Lees Ferry created Lake Powell and made the muddy Colorado River from a free flowing river (in 1963) into one controlled by what gets out of the Dam. This water is cleaner so doesn’t leave sediments as beaches.
The Colorado just below Lees Ferry

Around Lees ferry

Canyon wall at Lees Ferry

Cathedral Wash

Mushroom rocks
The landscape I love is that of canyonlands, high-desert, and long vistas. The purpose of my trip, however, was the North Rim (of the Grand Canyon) and, to get there, you have to go through lots of forest. The views once you get out are spectacular. I went to Jacob’s Lake, the rim road, and then the Cape Royal Road where I visited various points: Cape Final, Cape Royal, and Point Imperial. The latter is the most spectacular, especially the walk on the Ken Patrick trail from Point Imperial!

The Canyon is a mile deep (1.6 km) which the Colorado River carved; the rivers feeding into it are said to have given it its width. The North Rim is higher and gets a lot more snow and rain and that’s why it has ‘moved further’ away from the river (7 miles as opposed to 3 miles for the South Rim). I did a Rim to Rim walk years ago and that was wonderful and then you do notice this difference in width and height.
Of course, people lived here before the Europeans came. On the Walhalla Plateau, more than 100 farm sites have been discovered and there are many granaries. The people came up in the summer, the winter being harsh (12 feet of snow per year currently). The Walhalla Glades Pueblo is an example of a small-sized site, occupied between 1050 CE and 1150 CE, although people have lived here much longer.

There have been many fires, e.g. caused by lightning, and that produces the below picture. It is initially bare but then the pine trees give way to aspen and birches. In order to help control wildfires, the forest service has implemented ‘prescribed burns’, one of which was started right outside of the North Rim park. Many people are unhappy about this policy – myself included - and the next morning I left early because of the smoke and the haziness.
After the North Rim, I decided to go westward, to Fredonia and to Pipe Spring National Monuments. I had seen the latter on the map and like to visit NMs because they are informative. This definitely was! Pipe Spring NM is administered by the National Park Service and the Kaibab Paiute Indian Nation.

Pueblans had lived here for a long time but they left between 1000-1250 after which the Paiutes came. In the 1700s, the Spanish established trade routes through this area and white settlers came, e.g. Mormons who wanted to establish an independent state. Pipe Spring had a well and lots of grassland so that area became a mega-farm where the cattle that the Mormons gave their church through tithing was kept. It fed the workers building the temple in St. George.

To the south of this area, known as the Arizona Strip, is a remote area with only dirt roads that lead south to the Colorado. It is known as the Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument and was established by Bill Clinton in 2000. It includes the Mount Trumbull and Mount Logan Wilderness areas and petroglyphs at Nampaweap. Cell phones do not work and two spare tires are recommended for travel on these roads. At some point, I will try to get to Nampaweap, which is only about 50 miles in.

A wonderful trip with more to explore!