

## Grand Canyon, Phoenix 1/11-1/14

Contributed by Jane  
 Tuesday, 15 January 2008  
 Last Updated Friday, 18 January 2008

So close but yet so far. {rokzoom title=|At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3787.jpg {/rokzoom}

We got through the night cozy and toasty and woke up to a silent snow-covered campground. {rokzoom title=|Snowed in| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3748.jpg {/rokzoom} We were pretty well snowed in, along with a few other hardy winter campers at the South Rim. To really savor it, we went for an early morning walk in the deep fluffy snow. Chester comically hopped like a bunny through the deep snow to make it around the campground while Kell alternately ate snow and pretended to "fall"; so he could make snow angels, succeeding by the end in getting soaked through his three layers of waterproofing — all before starting his snowman, well, really it was a snow blob, but you get the idea. {rokzoom title=|Good enough to eat!| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3745.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Snow Blob| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3755.jpg {/rokzoom}

Our walk took us to a small meadow, freshly blanketed and sparkling in the sun. Chester seemed unusually attentive and had stopped his prancing and I quickly realized it wasn't the snowplows he was hearing, but the sounds of a herd of deer moving through the trees and munching on heavy, snow laden branches that had dropped into the range of their mouths. They came right out into the open and even Chester stood stock still as we watched them move closer to us, take a few looks up and continue munching their way through the meadow. It's amazing to me how I still feel such complete awe and wonder seeing these creatures move through the forest when they were regular backyard visitors in East Hampton. But it truly gave us a sense of being in a very special place before we even got our first glimpse of the Canyon.

We also ran into a few of our campground neighbors who were just as happy as we were to find themselves snow covered — in their case literally as they were camping out in tents. We chatted about shoveling, the National Park Service's "plowing" (driving a truck through the road to make a track), and the unprepared state of the campers. But everyone was still so happy. Snow just does that to some people I guess.

When we got back to our site, I was relieved that the snow provided such a distraction for Kell, as it freed me up to spend the next hour and a half shoveling snow from around the truck and trailer. I wasn't quite sure how useful shoveling would be given the unplowed campground road — but to my great amazement, when it came time to pull out, the truck just motored on up to the unplowed loop road and pulled just fine all the way to the parking lot, where we stashed the truck and trailer so we could do a little hike along the rim.

I had had visions of taking a hike down into the Grand Canyon and spending a night at the lodge down by the river, but it was not meant to be. We had to get to Phoenix for Miles's work and time was running short. But when we got to the rim, and I took in the enormity of the Canyon, I knew that even with the time, Kell would not have been able to make the hike. Or at least not the hike back up. We had to settle for the stunning views and the enticement to return in a few years to get to the bottom of the canyon — or maybe even do a rafting trip down the Colorado when Kell is older.

With few people sharing our views of the Canyon, we found out that we were doubly lucky to be there following such a big snow storm as it had cleared the Canyon of the smog that usually plagues it, sometimes obscuring the opposite rim. Instead, we arrived at the rim just as the snow clouds were lifting out of the Canyon, revealing its wonder and awesome proportions. It was so large that I don't think Kell could really take it in. He seemed content to walk along the trail on the rim, falling into the snow and finding reasons to kick it down from the walls built up along the sides of the trail. I guess that's no surprise, when I think of how difficult it was for me to take it in. Even now, looking at these pictures, I think I just don't get it, where does it begin and where does it end? {rokzoom title=|At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3757.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3769.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3788.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon| album=|1\_11|} images/stories/1\_11/IMG3796.jpg {/rokzoom}

But our canyon days were apparently over. We had planned to detour through another small canyon to get to Sedona on our way to Phoenix, but soon after we exited the freeway for the road to Sedona, we called the campground to check on availability and found out that the road we were heading down would soon turn into a 3 mile stretch of hair pin turns, which were badly plowed after the storm and would barely accommodate the length of our trailer. So, we sadly headed back to the interstate, hoping to find a place in Phoenix and get settled in for a week.

We hadn't made reservations in Phoenix because we had heard that there were RV parks on every corner. We

learned that there was even a whole Town made up of nothing but RV parks &ndash; Apache Junction. But we vowed to steer clear of that. But we tried the first park (the one closest to the University where Miles would be working) and found it to be in a kind of crappy area with RVs packed in like sardines. The next park was age restricted, and then another was dog restricted, and so on for a couple of hours. We ultimately found ourselves in the banished land of Apache Junction, and despite its location 20 miles away from ASU, there was a decent campground with only the most benign pet restrictions (no pit bulls &ndash; Chester is a lab mix, didn&rsquo;t you know?) and no age restrictions. And it wasn&rsquo;t asphalt. It even has a view of the Superstition Mountains so you don&rsquo;t feel like your living in the midst of one long strip mall (which you are). So, that&rsquo;s been our base for the last week.

Miles had three days of interaction with people like himself (those who know what oAW, ABM, EMF, GUI, and XML mean and know that Java is not just another word for coffee), showing off his new wares. And Kell and I had a couple of days to explore the usual city highlights &ndash; the Phoenix Zoo, a hike in the Gila Mountains, and the laundry room at the Campground. We had a family outing to see Taliesin West, the Frank Lloyd Wright complex, but upon arriving, we learned that the cost of a tour had gone from \$18 to \$32 per person (talk about inflation!) and we just couldn&rsquo;t stomach it. Instead, we went to the Heard Museum, one of the country&rsquo;s finest Native American cultural museums. Kell was fascinated by the activities provided for kids &ndash; everything from making burden baskets to learning how beaded jewelry was made. And I was fascinated by their collection of over 400 Katsina dolls &ndash; little totems used to invoke spirits for a variety of ceremonies performed throughout the year. The museum also had exhibits highlighting the particular impacts that colonial infiltration had on the region&rsquo;s many tribes, including stories about the &ldquo;boarding schools&rdquo; that many children were sent off to. It was enlightening and sad.

Now we're finally off to the next stop ... Santa Fe.