

trail dropped another 300 feet, so we decided to retrace our steps. It was tiring going back up those tall steps! It took a little over an hour to do the down + back. I walked down to see the swimming pools, which are beautiful greens + blues.

Back on the road at 12:15. We stopped for gas at a Pemex + they were playing country ^{"country"} music. I asked the young woman if it was popular in Mexico and she said no (I'd never heard it down here before). She told me she likes Banda music, esp. Julio Alvarez. Grant + I listened to some but didn't like it.

We parked in  Tule about 1:45 and got nieves. Then we went to a few stores to buy pens, veggies, spaghetti, and ground beef. Lots of cute little mom + pop shops in this town.

Back to camp at 3:30. Cloudy today, high 81°
~~We took~~

Tuesday Jan 24

Back into ~~the~~ ^{the city} today. The small street just to the left as you leave the campground does in fact go through to the highway. This way it's only a quarter mile to a colectivo. An eagle-eyed driver saw us approaching the road + pulled over before we even signalled. He dropped us on the main highway and we walked west through the Reforma neighborhood to get off the highway. It was pleasant + upscale. We saw cashews in a fancy shop + bought a pound for about \$7. They are called "nuez de India."

We had never seen them for sale in Mexico and were delighted to find them (for stir-fry). To our surprise we saw them later in the Sanchez Pascuas market.

There was no way to cut through to Xochimilco, so we had to go back to the highway and then into this charming barrio with lots of murals and gringos, coffee shops, and a piece of the old aqueduct that used to bring water into the city. I bought arroz con leche (atole) from a vendor but forgot I don't like it - too watery. I prefer oat.

We walked back south, across the highway, and down Garcia Vigil street, past the charming arquitos (little arches) of the former aqueduct. Gaily painted storefronts & murals line the other side of the street.

In Conzatti Park we got tortas from the La Hormiga food truck. Grant got chile relleno and I got chicken. Stuffed with cheese & vegetables and grilled like a panini (not squished as much). Goopy, crispy, & delicious. 94 pesos total (about \$5). A lot of food.

Then we walked to the zocalo for a last visit before heading to Juarez Market for grasshopper salt (3 for 100 pesos, \$5), tejate powder (60 p, \$3), and a ball of Oaxaca cheese (quesillo) for 80 p (\$4).

After a quick spin through the

Oaxaca

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20 november food market (masks required for entry & they spritz your hands with gel) and a stroll through the pasillo de humo (OSTA would shut that place down! so unhealthy for the workers to breathe smoke all day!) we walked north to Super Jugos Angelita for a mangoneada (mango smoothie with banana, strawberry, milk). 45 p (\$2.25) for a big cup. Delicious. We were delighted to see that it was in a neighborhood market called Mercado Sanchez Pascuas. Lots of gringos who appear to live here or at least stay a while. We loved the market. Beautiful fruits & veggies, bulk grains & nuts (including cashews), household items. Someday when we're too old to drive down here we'll fly down & rent a house in this neighborhood for a month or two. We talked to several gringos today who spend time here in the winter.

Back to camp at 3. We walked 7 miles today. Carole is feeling better after having been up all night with diarr'hea, fever, headache. We gave her a dose of azithromycin and some saltines & rehydration salts.

Wed Jan 25

Saw the southern cross this morning! Right above the bathrooms, in the southern sky. On the road at 7. Light traffic in the city. I drove. A few confusing intersections, but

Tolls 400 = \$20

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not too crazy. By 7:45 we were on the toll road. (It's the lanes in town that are confusing, as they start & end unexpectedly, and aren't always clearly marked. My driving method is to go slow, try not to change lanes, and let traffic flow around me.)

The toll road is in good condition. Total today 400 pesos (\$20). First we drove through mountains with rounded hills covered in green & brown trees. 52° at 8:30. We hit some fog but it didn't last too long. We climbed up into pine forest, then dropped down into desert, with eroded fingers of red earth, then the ground covered in white crust. Pine plantations. Forests of cactus covered the hillsides, some straight, unbranched columns, some branched, others treelike. Lots of joshua trees & other yucca. Apparently this area is quite biodiverse and there are many species of cactus. Nopal bushes too.

The road was a bit curvy but never scary or "edgy."

The unbranched columnar cactus look like green poles. They march up the sides of the hills, coating them like porcupine quills. Trees covered in yellow flowers.

Fields of cabbage & broccoli.

Puebla is a huge city & thank goodness there is a toll bypass.

Miles of dense grey concrete housing. We missed the turn-off because the main road said Cholula, and Google had the wrong road name for the exit. Easy retorno 6 km farther.

Arrived at Trailer Park Las Americas in Cholula about 12:30 pm. 73°. Walked to Aurora Bodega in nearby Plaza San Diego. Crazy busy, noisy intersection. Mask required in the store. It's a full supermarket, including produce.

Saw two volcanoes today: first Orizaba, and the second one unknown.

The carnitas place on the corner is closed. We bought arrachera + fixings at La Aguacate on the other corner. 1/2 kilo of meat plus tortillas, salsa, guacamole, veggies for 305 pesos (\$15). I had a big cup of horchata-yum!

Carole + Brud drove separately and got to camp about an hour after us. It was easier not having to worry about them following us.

I braved my fear of heights and climbed the campground water tower (30 feet?) to watch the sun set over Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl volcanoes. We could also see the Cholula pyramid with the church on top.

Tacos for dinner. Grant loved the meat. I had bean, cheese, + guacamole.

62° + a chilly breeze at 7:30.

Puebla

76

Thurs Jan 26, 2023

We are at about 7000' elevation. Winter temps in the 70s, nights in the 40s.

48° this morning. Grant & I walked down to the corner, but no tamale vendor.

Turns out they don't set up until about 8 am. We waited and went back. Grant got mole from the far corner and I got thick chocolate con leche atole from the vendor on the near corner. Like thick hot chocolate.

Campground notes: the showers are in a separate building in the upper parking lot. The parking in that lot is closer to the bathrooms & has power.

An Uber driver & real estate salesman named Jose lives here in one of the apartments. He drove the four of us + Isla to the Zocalo ^{in Puebla} for 150 pesos. He spoke English & was very friendly. He was playing a Mexican radio station with English-language songs like the Beatles. He said some of his ancestors are buried in the Cathedral. He told us the reason that the city is known as Puebla de los Angeles is because the church bells are so heavy that it is believed that angels had to help lift them into place.

He explained that a "Deposito" is a store that sells beer for sure, and often other beverages & food items.

We left the campground at 9:30 & arrived at the Zocalo at 10:08.

Puebla has a world class tourist infrastructure, with friendly tourist info offices, uniformed tourist officers everywhere, and an army of workers keeping the streets spotless. After picking up a map we split with C.B. Grant & I revisited the gorgeous cathedral with its soaring interior, marble columns, and gleaming woodwork.

Then up the lovely pedestrian street with towering trees, to the Santo Domingo church & its glorious Capilla del Rosario, covered almost entirely in 24 carat gold leaf. Truly stunning. We noticed that the Virgin of the Rosary had a silver crescent moon at her feet. Turns out there are three types of virgins: Rosario, Guadalupe, and 1 other. ^{Some} of their moon symbols are more hidden.

Choir music in the church (canned) adds to the sense of wonder. Chapel visits are now by donation.

A second newsstand worker told us that the Guia Roji is discontinued since 5 years ago.

Back we went up the delightful pedestrian street, which goes for blocks. Stopped to grab a plate of tiny, succulent tacos de canasta from a vendor. Five for 12 pesos (12 cents each!). You eat them standing up, slathered with salsa & guacamole. The other clients were pleased to have us try this treat and were so friendly.

Then to the Mercado de Sabores for a sandwich for me at Super Cemitas Emma. A huge sesame roll slathered with refries, then an enormous thin breaded & fried chicken cutlet, caramelized onions, papalo (like cilantro), salt, * an entire avocado, & a mountain of shredded

quesillo. I skipped the salsa (sin picante).

Between the two of us we could only eat half! 88 pesos (\$4.50). The owner's 2-year-old granddaughter entertained us with her toy elephant, and by jumping off her little stool. She had colored ribbons in her hair. Adorable. We walked through the rest of the U-shaped market. It's a great place, spotless, with all kinds of food + sweets.

Paseo Bravo is a lovely park with huge trees. A bus rapid transit line runs on the adjacent street.

Palafoxiana Library, 1646, first + oldest library in the Americas. A bit pricey at 42 pesos each (\$2) but an amazing place.

Woodwork is jaw dropping.

Back to the Zocalo for a sit break.

Hightoday 71°.

Gorgeous architecture here. Love the herringbone brickwork with talavera tile insets.

Back to pedestrian street. It's retail, with many upscale shops. One street had sweet shops + pottery shops. I bought a selection of sweets for \$5. The talavera pottery is gorgeous. One shop had a video showing how it's made. It's all hand painted.

Needing a comfortable place to sit, I splurged on an ice cream at a place on the zocalo. 54 pesos (\$2.70) for a small scoop. Cajeta. Really good.

We saw very few gringos today.

Tolls 574 p = \$29

Puebla

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We couldn't get a hold of Jose Uber and ended up taking a taxi back for 200 pesos (CAB paid). The driver tried to get us to pay 250 when he dropped us off because it was so far. It was awkward.

We went with Carole & Brad to Aguacates restaurant so they could order takeout arrachera. The workers made a taco for Isla! I tried Carole's cucumber & lime agua fresca - yum!

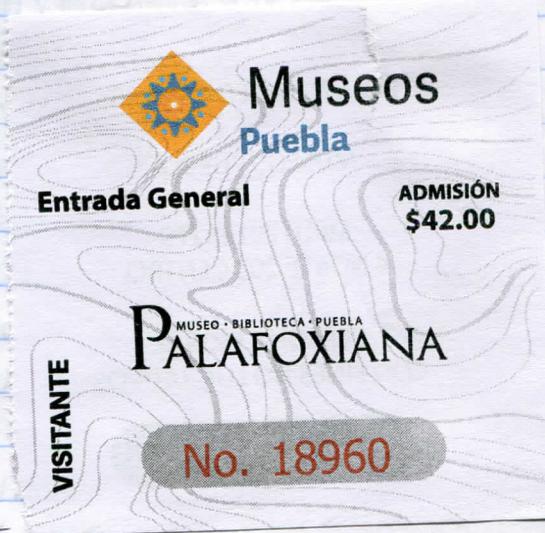
Back at camp I had a nice chat in Spanish with a Mexican man who is staying here for a month while he and his wife travel around Mexico in their motorhome. *

58° at 7:15. We walked six miles today.

* He told me that when he was a kid living in Ensenada, he used to watch the RVs go by and say "someday." He said many Mexicans dream of RVing and the number who can do it is slowly growing. He said he has found many U.S. campers to be a bit snobby & elitist. That's a shame. He said hitchhiking is called "ride", and that there are many interesting small towns around Puebla to visit, with crafts & markets.

Fri Jan 27

43° this morning! on the road 7:20.
(Van says 38°) No bugs here. Light fog on the



s/p means "sin picante" or "no spice".

road. Correction to earlier journal: vehicle pulled to right side of lane with left turn signal on means, "I see you and you can pass me."

Scenery today: rolling hills covered in small rounded trees that are reminiscent of oak. When we drove past Popocatepetl it was quiet; when C&B drove by a few seconds later it was belching a big cloud! Apparently it's been quite active lately.

We sailed along a good (expensive - tolls today 574 p = \$29) toll road. For a while we were above 8800'.

Parts of toll road 57D were in poor shape, with patches of potholes. Stopped for gas & breakfast. Saw a big solar farm. Lots of low haze, looked like smog; pollution from Mexico City? We took the toll road called "Arco Norte" which bypasses Mexico City. Saw nopales with huge pads, Joshua trees, beautiful mountain scenery.

Google maps said there was a backup and took us on a narrow, bumpy detour through the town of Tula (which has a Toltec pyramid & stone warrior statues - who knew?).

Turns out there was an accident & a miles long backup that would have delayed us for hours. It also affected the southbound lane & we saw traffic stopped for over 6 miles. We saw another long backup in the other lane near Queretaro & were grateful to have missed that one too.

Lunch at a Pemex with a grassy area for Isla. Arrived at La Comer in San Miguel at 2:30. So weird to be in a fancy grocery store for the first time in a month. Arrived in campground about 3:45, where Hans was waiting to direct us in the gate. I drove after lunch.

Ralph + Patti returned about 5 and it was so great to see them. I was exhausted + went to bed at 7:45! Campground full - glad I made reservations! C+B love their spot in back corner. We are on east side.

Sat Jan 28

40° this morning. Doesn't get light here til 7. Grant under the weather (intestinal).

I gave C+B a quick tour of the neighborhood (church, abarrotes, carnitas, fruteria, lavanderia, Mercado Sano). There's a new restaurant next to Mercado Sano. The Saturday market looked bigger + better.

Went to noon AA meeting but Grant wasn't feeling well enough for socializing after. Don't know if they're still doing lunch.

I went for a stroll around Juarez Park. Saw a bride + groom being chauffeured to their wedding in a vintage 1936 car. Several fountains were turned on that I've never seen on before. Many mixed couples, American + Mexican. Women walking to the wedding in fancy dresses, wearing tennis shoes + carrying their high heels. High today 75°.

Stir fry for dinner. Sitting out by our fire pit. So nice to not be stuck in the van. Half a moon high in the sky.

Sun Jan 29, 2023

40° low this morning. Acceptable tamales at church plaza 8 am.

Other campers here: Larry & Nancy from Colorado, Steve & Bing from Ontario, Carla & Heiko from Germany, Barbel & her husband (Germans) still live here. Wakum ←

I did another neighborhood walk with CtB today, showing them Stirling Dickinson, the Mina Real Hotel, the pantheon (Brid found Dickinson's grave, which has a nice photo headstone), and Guadiana Park.

After lunch, Grant and I walked to Colonia Guadalupe to see the murals (there was an art walk today but we didn't go in any studios). The path around the north side of the neighborhood has been cleaned up and is really nice; it goes a long way. It's shady and there was a nice breeze. We sat for a while by the church (Grant's blood sugar went low) while mass ended and people powered out & headed home. A woman was selling glossy religious calendars.

High today 79°.

We bought a talavera bowl in the artisanal market. 250 p (\$12.50).

I got nuez (pecan) + pistachio ice cream at the market. Half the price of Oaxaca or El Tule. Sat in one of the gardens to eat it + people watch.

Then we walked to the main plaza + sat there for a while. I chatted with a gringo who's lived in SMA for 30 years and has really integrated. Interesting to hear his impressions. He says rich Mexicans hate AMLO (the president) because he is implementing social programs to help the poor. He says the majority of money invested in SMA is Mexican, and second is Chinese! Koreans are the majority immigrants in Guanajuato State.

At 5 we met C+B at Tio Lucas restaurant across from the Opera House. It's fancy but the clientele seems to be mostly Mexican. The interior is beautiful, filled with dark ceramic pieces, and butterfly-covered catrinas. Lots of tinwork panels. The waiters all speak English. C+B took us out to thank us for being tour guides. We had caesar salad made tableside, with real anchovies. The waiter made the dressing in a big wooden bowl. He cracked the eggs by putting each one between a spoon + large fork and tapping the spoon on the side of the bowl. He then let the white ooze out into a discard bowl, then the yolk into the salad bowl. When the dressing was ready he dipped in whole romaine leaves (16 each) laid them on a plate, and topped each one with a large buttery crouton (crustini). Served

with a basket of bread + garlic butter. Delicious but intensely flavored. Plenty of food for me. Grant had flan for desert.

After dinner we walked to the main square. The streets around the main plaza have been hung with tin stars that light up at night. The garden is festooned with stars + twinkling lights. Absolutely magical! Add in the Parroquia all lit up and it really takes your breath away. mariachi groups in tailored matching outfits played songs for hire.

Back to camp about 7:45. 6 miles today. A warm evening. 64° at 8:45.

Mon Jan 30 High 82° Low 44°

Dropped off laundry around the corner. 5 kilos at 26 pesos per kilo is 130 p (\$6.50). Some things are not cheap in Mexico! (Ralph told us he pays 700 pesos (\$35) to have his van washed here!) Walked to City Market to see if they had sugar-free peanut butter. Yes - for \$11 a pound! I'm embarrassed to be seen in that opulent place. We can get peanut butter at Mercado Sano for \$5.50 a pound, but it's unsalted. Walked to Guadiana Park. We're both a little crabby today. NA meeting at 5 was sparsely attended

but mostly new faces. Grant got elotes on the corner for dinner and I had leftover stir fry.

Tues Jan 31, 2003 High 81°, low 45°

At 9, Hans' friend Mauricio picked us up in his little red Kia. It was a tight squeeze for the four of us. It took 2 hours to get to Queretaro because of road construction...

He dropped us off by Jardin Zenia at 11. We got maps & info from a little tourist kiosk. We naively thought three hours would be enough time, but it wasn't.

We walked up the pedestrian street called Andador 5 de Mayo, past the Chichimeca dancer statue (which looked so much smaller than I remembered it). It was still kind of quiet. Stopped at La Fabrica de Chocolate for churros with "salsa de chocolate," a thick chocolate sauce for dipping. Delicious!

* note: On our way out of camp this morning we ran into Mike & Terri Church as they arrived to play tennis (they are staying in one of the campground apartments). It was fun to introduce them to Brad & Carole. They are celebrities in my eyes for the wonderful travel books they've written. *

We continued on to Plaza de Armas. Casa de Corregidora was closed for repairs so we couldn't go inside & see the murals.

At the Templo de Santa Cruz we ran into a nice American couple who live there and wondered if we needed directions. It was a very kind gesture.

10 minutes' walk up to Mercado la Cruz (lots of baby Jesus doll vendors set up for Candelaria in two days). The food stall Grant found online was closed. No place in the market looked appealing, so we backtracked to a cute little place called San Monera, a small courtyard cafe. They were playing great bossa nova rock covers. The food was very good. I had chicken breast stuffed with cheese & mushrooms and covered in white sauce. Grant had enchiladas Queretano. 270 p with tips (\$14), and diet Coke for Grant.

Short walk to the mirador to see the 18th century aqueduct. Then we retraced our steps and Mauricio picked us up at 2. We didn't have time to see Viterbo church or the Cathedral. It took 1.5 hours to get back to San Miguel. He took a back street that dropped us on Ancha de San Antonio just on the La Comer side of the new Mobil station (turn right onto Caracol just past Mirador El Caracol, and that drops you onto 5 de Mayo).

Shower, dinner, nice chat with Ralph & Patti. Also chatted with Nancy about

her Peace Corps experiences in her 60s.

Cost for driver today was 2000 pesos (#100). Pricy, and because we were paying him 250 per hour wait time (cheaper than two 1200 p round trips) it was hard to relax, enjoy ourselves, and take our time. Future reference: don't try to do Quer. as a day trip! Pay the bucks to park at the Flamingo and have more time in the city.

Wed Feb 1, 2023

Walk up to mirador: 300 feet elevation gain (6900' at top), 450 steps (the last part is an incline). Bad air today, filled with smog. No egrets in the trees; it was 10 am. Took 30 minutes to get there with Grant. It's 1 mile. No jacaranda blooming, yet. Walked back the long way, to the dulceria at the north entrance to the artisanal market. Couldn't find any atole I liked: galleta is way too sweet, blanco is just corn meal + water with no sugar, and the chocolate (champurrado) was made with water. The nice vendor gave me large samples to try, and when I decided not to buy I gave her 5 pesos anyway.

We bought a large tin star (270 p = #14). I'm not sure how we'll get it home! Walked west on Insurgentes, ~~to~~ south on Quebrada (view of Bellas Artes from bridge), west on Pila Seca, then back past Unity Hall. A little over 3 miles total.

Ralph is sick so we're rescheduling our dinner with them. I took a nap, in hopes of staying up late for Candelaria tonight.

At 5 I walked to Pergola Gallery in the back corner of Instituto Allende to see David Alexander's new paintings. He is a talented musician and artist I've run into over the years here (Mexican). He painted the big mural in Instituto courtyard. I liked his paintings; they are detailed, colorful, with lots of symbolism. They were serving wine and hors d'oeuvres (croissant sandwiches, crustini with cheese & tomato). Gringos adore.

At 7 I walked to the park for the opening concert of Candelaria. The Leones de la Sierra de Xichú played Huapango, or Arribeño, music, from this part of Mexico. Poetry singing, two violins, and two types of guitars, with dancers (the man does a sort of tap dance in cowboy boots). The crowd loved it. Mojigangas (giant puppets) twirled to the music. I ate a bag of popcorn & drank a big cup of crema de coco (an agua fresco coconut & milk drink - very good) - he wouldn't let me pay for half a cup.

Came back to camp to get warmer clothes, then back to park at 9:15. Earlier I had watched men making floral designs with sawdust in different colors, in front of the cross where they would build the altar.

By the time I returned, the velación, or vigil, had begun. The floral carpet was done, and they were adding ^{ex}flowers, candles, and bowls of seeds. Women had carried a bier with the Virgin. After a man blessed it with copal smoke, they set it on the altar. A group of people played some sort of lutes and sang off-key songs to the Virgin. The music was repetitive and almost trancelike. People lined up to ^{be}blessed. They put 50 pesos in a basket and the "priest" guy (dressed in regular clothes) said prayers over them and doused them with incense. I love the mix of Indigenous and Colonial religious traditions. People began carrying in big pots of tamales & atole to hand out later in the evening. I believe some of them stayed all night.

Carole & Brud came over after their dinner at Alex & Willie's. I chatted with David Alexander and was able to tell him how much I liked his paintings (he'd been mobbed by fans at the gallery). A developmentally disabled man squealed with glee when he saw Isla, got her to roll onto her back, and tickled her tummy. His father beamed. It was adorable. We reluctantly tore ourselves away at 10:15.

Thurs Feb. 2

Walked to San Antonio church before 8:00 mass, to watch people bringing their baby Jesus dolls to be blessed. Not a lot of people because

it's a workday. The big service is tonight.

About 10:30 we walked over to the park ~~at~~ with C&B to watch the blessing of the seeds. Some of the same people were still there from last night. They'd ^{woven} ~~built~~ a beautiful arched retablo out of cucharilla and other plants and placed it around the cross. Still singing, incense, people being blessed, and baskets of seeds & beans. The sawdust designs had been mostly trampled into a colorful swirl, like a watercolor after rain. Willie came there to meet C&B and it was nice to see her. Sad that Carole is not including us in their socializing.

Walked to La Comer after lunch for groceries and I had a 15 peso soft serve ice cream - vanilla is the only flavor and it was delicious and just the right size.

After dinner Grant & I walked to Parque Juarez for the evening concert. Two young women singing (slightly off pitch) to canned pop music. Back to camp, chat with Ralph & Patti. Heard PA music from the church and went to check it out with C&B.

Candelaria mass on the plaza. They had moved out an altar, piano organ, and dozens of plastic stools. A woman kindly offered us three. Before Bud could get one a ^{tiny} old lady in a bright pink rebozo rushed over to sit on it, giggling happily. She had long gray hair in a ponytail, and

a childlike voice. Dozens of dolls lined the church steps, along with bottles of water. The service started with lots of upbeat songs. Then there was a procession where the priest lit people's candles and then those people lit other people's candles. Suddenly the moon-lit (almost full) square was glowing with candlelight, quite a beautiful sight. The old lady next to me had a big candle and it kept dripping wax on her hands. She would look at me wide-eyed and giggle, even though it hurt. I gave her a napkin to protect ~~her~~ hand and suggested she pour off the hot wax before it dripped. After that she seemed to have fun tipping the candle and watching the wax puddle on the stones.

The star of the service was a statue of the Virgin de San Juan de los Lagos, aka Virgin de las Luces, for which the church paid (if I heard correctly) 78,000 pesos (\$4000). She wasn't very big...

The service was still going after an hour when we left at 9. We could still hear it at 9:30.

Turns out the bell ringers climb up into the belfries, stand right under the bells, and pull with gusto. I doubt they're wearing earplugs. Between bell ringing they perched on the roof, their feet hanging over the edge, white tennis shoes swinging as they kicked their feet. 30 feet up? Gave me vertigo!

Friday Feb. 3

Chilly morning, 46° , overcast, windy. Stayed in van all morning to keep warm, reading & doing computer stuff. After lunch we went for a long ramble: San Juan market & surrounds, down Canal, around San Antonio. Got a scone & biscotti at Mercado Sano, expensive but tasty. Grabbed a few veggies and back to camp about three for shower and hang out.

Alex & Willie stopped by to see the campground and say hi before going to dinner with C&B. Grant went to NA meeting at 6:30. I was going to go to a film in the park but it was too cold. Instead I watched part of the movie on YouTube. Pedro Páramo, filmed in SMA in 1967. Didn't hold my attention, but good Spanish practice. The wind was strong, kicking up dust and putting leaves and twigs onto the van roof. Epiphytes litter the ground.

Saturday Feb 4, 2023

32° this morning! Glad we have a space heater! But the sky was blue, and as soon as the sun rose you could feel its warmth.

Breakfast at Mercado Sano with C&B, Alex, Willie, and their friend Mike. We really

like Alex & Willie & were glad to spend some time with them. Grant & I had eaten, so had a carrot muffin. It was excellent.

On the way out Grant bought a Oaxacan tamale from the guy who is always selling them out front. They're large & flat, wrapped in banana leaves. They're 75 pesos each! (Almost \$4). Most tamales are 15 or 20. These are maybe equivalent to 1.5 or 2 regular tamales. Grant asked for mole but got chicken verde. He ate it for lunch & said it was delicious but not worth the price. He also bought 1/4 kilo of fruto seco mole paste (dried fruits & nuts). I got an order of chiles en nogado to go and ate it for lunch. It came with rice & salad. (Salads in Mexico never have dressing). It was good, but I forgot that it's served at room temp, and the pomegranate seeds are too grainy. So no need to eat it again.

After lunch we walked to the carniceria on Palmas, behind the church, to buy a chicken breast. After putting it in our fridge we went for a walk around Guadiana. Along the way we saw a folkdance troupe (ballet folklórico) heading to the park for a 2pm performance (not on the schedule). C&B joined me. We actually got seats and stayed for the whole performance, almost two hours. A mix of young people from grupo Meztlil from Santa Maria del Oro, Durango (over 11 hours away by bus), and dance groups from SMA & Guanajuato state. The announcer referred to it as an "Ensemble

Cultural Durango Guanajuato". The kids from Durango were wonderful, performing a variety of choreographed dances in beautiful costumes. A waltz in ballgowns, dances mixed with skits, swirling colorful skirts, dashing young men in suits or aprons. Shoes as percussion.

I ran back to camp to get a charger for ~~my~~ Carole's and my phones. On the way back I saw the kids heading for their bus and told them how much I had enjoyed their dancing. Their faces lit up and they asked if they could take a picture with me! That was fun.

At 4 there was a one-hour prehispanic dance ritual. A dancer with his face blackened and black smudges all over his body. He wore moth cocoon leg rattles and a coyote skin & head. Musicians played flutes, log & skin drums, a turtle shell with deer antler sticks, rocks that made a variety of tones, cocoon rattles.

The group was called something Pajaros del Viento (birds of the wind). They were sort of an amalgam of Maya, Tolttec, etc. Cultures from 900 years ago. We had front row seats.

Back to camp at 5:30. Grant made chicken mole with rice. Delicious but a bit spicy and I shouldn't have eaten it. I'll have a sore throat for days.

Rock concert at 6, but I decided not to go. The park is 1/2 mile away and we can hear the bass from here!

SMA

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Sunday Feb. 5, 2023

38° at 7 am. No heater needed last night. Fireworks started at 6 am. ^{why?} (Apparently they go off like clockwork from 9:45-10 each night on weekends for weddings at Instituto Allende and Rosewood Hotel.)

I left camp at 8:30 to walk to the botanical garden (El Charco del Ingenio). Quiet in the centro. People sweeping streets with twig brooms, cleaning up Saturday revelry. People also wash the sidewalks in Mexico (gets rid~~e~~ of dog poop, which is also nice).

It took about 50 minutes to get to the garden. It's a great uphill workout. So many fancy houses up there, and they all have alarm systems.

Arrived at garden about 9:20. Few people, and good light for photos & viewing. It was so nice to be there alone & have time to watch birds and sit on benches. Saw avocet, blue grey gnatcatchers (so little & cute), house finch, various sparrows, black-necked stilts, lots of pintail & shoveler, Mexican ducks, Bullocks oriole, an unidentified yellow bellied oriole, blue-winged teal, unidentified woodpecker, cactus wren. There's also a birding trail on the other side of the presa (across the dam) but I didn't have time to explore it. My favorite part is the trail into the canyon. It feels wild & far away. I reluctantly left via the lower gate at 10:40. Next time bring lunch & allow more time here.

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I walked back via a bunch of callejones in barrio del Tecolote (Chepito, Landin, Caracol). I came back via Barrancas to see if El Chorro church was open. It wasn't. It's the oldest church in San Miguel.

I was delighted to see that the egrets were roosting, and got a few pictures. Back to camp about 11:45. 5 miles total.

Sadly, I learned that Mike & Terri Church are ultra-conservative Trumplers. So disappointing.

The wind is kicking up a lot of dust. We need a ground cloth under our canopy. A delightful 74° in the shade.

Around 3 pm we headed to dinner at mare Nostrum, an Italian restaurant on Umaran, with Ralph & Patti. We had the lovely small interior patio all to ourselves - except for Carlo, a very large & contented cat sleeping on a chair at the adjacent table (and admirably filling said chair).

Ralph ordered a mushroom & goat cheese appetizer to share. Came with yummy whole grain bread & butter. I ordered shrimp pasta with goat cheese. It was very good, though had some red pepper flakes. Grant loved his eggplant spaghetti. 375 p (~\$20) plus tip. Really nice conversation with Ralph & Patti.

Turns out it's a 3-day weekend due to Constitution Day. They call it a puente, or "bridge" weekend when it's 3 days.

Although we got to the restaurant at 3:30, we didn't leave until 5:30, so it felt like a regular dinner time. The food takes its time, as it's all prepared fresh. House made pasta, though I couldn't tell the difference from packaged.

Mon Feb 6

35° at 6:30 am. Walked to La Comer. Didn't know they had ATMs so we headed to the one at City Market, but it was out of order. Made spaghetti for lunch. (Got some ground sirloin for \$5 a pound). After lunch walked to Guadalajara Pharmacy ATM. It was out of money so we walked to centro. The ATM on the main square had money. Walked on Recreo back to Suarez Park. I went down in the arroyo, where there are a few trails, but they don't connect. Back at camp we began cleaning & packing for departure tomorrow. I was able to find places for the big star & the talavera bowls. May they survive the return topos. 79° at 3:30.

Sandwiches for dinner then took down canopy & kitchen. Visited with Ralph & Patti until 8:30.

There are mosquitoes here, though not many. We put up our door net & it worked great to keep the bugs out. (We left it up & didn't have another bug in the van the rest of the trip.)

~~Mon~~ Tues Feb 7

44° at 6:30. On the road at 7:45. Light traffic & we were out of town quickly.

17 p toll = \$ 90¢

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A delightful drive today. Rural roads, beautiful scenery, a few small towns. Stopped for gas at 8:45. Ralph avoids Pemex stations, believing they have too much entrenched corruption. He is comfortable using credit cards if they bring the machine to you and you can watch the transaction.

Smoky air today - burning fields & debris piles. Route: Celaya, Salvatierra, Acámbaro, Maravatio, Tlalpujahua, Sierra Chincua. We saw several fairy tale cemeteries near Acámbaro (I think) with cathedral-spired headstones.

Oxxos don't appear to sell bread anymore, so we stopped before lunch to buy bread at a small store. The proprietor spoke English. I'm always surprised to find people in the smallest towns who've lived in the States, but I guess it makes perfect sense that they are the very ones who most need to go north to find work & a chance to save some money.

The road in GTO state was really good. Lovely, rural, black soil plowed. Signs said "Ruta de los Conventos." Crossed an actual river, an unusual sight up here in the altiplano. The road got patchy & bumpy when we crossed into Michoacán. (We also crossed parts of Mexico State.)

Our route was delightfully convoluted - we sort of zigzagged our way south & a little bit east. No direct route, so Google maps took us on a series of rural

Sierra Chincua

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roads & through a few small towns. The scenery just kept getting prettier. Lakes, mountains, fields.

Just south of Maravatio we saw a livestock market & pulled over. It turned out to be a weekly tianguis, where people come from all over the area to buy & sell cows, horses, turkeys, pigs, goats, sheep, saddles, spurs, boots, & blankets. Food tents set up as well. Grant got tacos from a guy who lived in Ohio for 7 years & spoke good English. Super friendly. We sat at a table with a nice woman. She laughed when Grant's first bite of taco was so spicy he gasped. She pointed to the limes & said they really help cut the heat! Then her husband showed up. He was not Mr. Smiley. Two young guys played accordion & guitar & sang harmony. Lots of men drinking pulque, a milky whitish fermented beverage made from the sap of the maguey agave. ~~Distilled, it becomes tequila~~ ~~or mezcal.~~

So many markets have droning PA systems advertising "snake oil" cures for everything under the sun.

It was a really fun stop and a great glimpse of a slice of rural Mexican life. Baby piglets being piled into a truck bed, people picking turkeys up by their wings to gauge their weight, a man feeding tiny calves from a bottle, goats bleating.

Things for sale by the roadside today were strawberries (we saw acres of greenhouses), small woven baskets, and piles of large bean pods.

Heading to Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve. Soon we were climbing up into the pine trees, and the scenery was beautiful! The road was great too, newly paved. At the entrance to Angangueo we turned onto a dirt road, paid a 70 peso fee, and drove 2 km up to the entrance & parking area. We picked Sierra Chincua because it's supposed to be less crowded & an easier hike than El Rosario. There's a big parking area with flatish spots (we used a few leveling blocks). There were a dozen cars here when we arrived at 2 pm. We walked around to look at the craft shops. They sell all sorts of monarch kitsch: jewelry, clothes, mobiles, sculptures, napkin holders. Nothing tempted us! There are comedors with tables overlooking the pine trees. There is some interpretive signage. We're at 10,700 feet! The air definitely feels thin.

No signal up here, and it's kind of nice to have a break. Leftover spaghetti for dinner. The cars have left, but there are four other rigs here for the night. It's pitch black outside, and quiet! It's magical to be way up high in this pine forest.

EJIDO LOS REMEDIOS

\$70.00 **Nº 00344**

RESERVA DE LA BIOSFERA
MARIPOSA MONARCA

SANTUARIO SIERRA CHINCUA

EJIDO LOS REMEDIOS, MUNICIPIO DE
OCAMPO, ESTADO DE MICHOACÁN

Parking
fee

Sierra Chincua, Mich.

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Wed Feb 8, 2023

Comfortable night with 2 quilts. 32° outside, 43° in the van. We didn't emerge from the covers until 7:30. The sun was warm by 9. At 10 a tour bus arrived, and other vehicles began pouring in. To our chagrin it got cloudy.



80 pesos
per person
entry fee

We started hiking just before noon. It took 35 minutes at a semi-slow pace to get to where the horses drop you off. You start out walking on the horse trail. Although the sign says a guide is required, it isn't, and we opted not to take one. We didn't want to feel rushed, or to figure out how much to tip. To figure out where the trail was, we followed others. There were some big groups, including 50 school kids with 6 adults. Once you get past the confusing spot where horses go one way and pedestrians another, the route is marked with butterfly signs.

From the horse dropoff to the entrance sign took about 10 minutes. It was a gentle uphill to the horse dropoff and after that it was down, up, down, up. Very dusty. There is actually a loop, but the signage is confusing.

We followed the butterfly sign and after walking a few minutes on a narrow, somewhat rugged trail (the trail to the entrance is wider, flat, and in good condition, except for a few ruts at the beginning), we looked up and saw thousands of butterflies weighing down the fir branches and covering the trunks. The trees are called oyamel (*abies religiosa*). We were at 11,100 feet! No pines up here, they are lower down.

The forest is gorgeous — thick fir with understory of red, white, purple, yellow flowers, including lupine. Occasional views of valley, fields, houses far below. Overcast & cold today, so the butterflies weren't flying. So disappointing. Many had died overnight from the cold, and the ground was sprinkled with wings. Guides were resuscitating the ones that had fallen but were still alive — they put them in their mouth, wings sticking out, until they are warm enough to fly. One guide said they save 400 a day.

The butterflies are brown when their wings are closed, and well camouflaged. Without binoculars they just look like bags hanging from the trees. Glad I had binocs & zoom lens, though the bright white sky made it hard to photograph.

A woman took a picture of me — her idea! — covered in butterflies she picked up off the ground and arranged on me. Some turned out to be still alive, and I felt bad that she had touched them.

Finally the sun came out for a minute and we saw a few flashes of orange as some of them took flight. After about 1.5 hours with the butterflies I was getting cold, and began to head down. It took about 35 minutes to get down, but Grant had left earlier, so I was walking faster. It was three hours round trip, and approx. 3.5 miles (my fit said 3.1 and Grant's said 3.9).

At one point I asked a guide whether the trail was a loop. (We had walked farther and it looked like a dead end.) Turns out the loop was to the right above us, but he said there were no butterflies up there this year. Then he asked me for a \$1 tip! I did not comply... He was already with a group that was presumably going to tip him.

The sun came out for a while when we got to the bottom, but it was too late to walk all the way back up. A vendor was selling beautiful prints of the butterflies in flight against a blue sky. Wish we could have seen that! Lesson learned - it's not always sunny up here, so check forecast before coming.

Yesterday a little girl begged for a tip to clean my dusty shoes, but I had no money and hadn't even done the hike. Today she wasn't there. Ecotourism works when it generates enough money to support the community. Here, the goal is to prevent logging of the pine forests.

At 3:45 we decided to drive to Angangueo, a Pueblo Mágico 20 minutes south on a windy mountain ride. We dropped over 2000', down to 8500. Soon we were back in the pines. Once a silver mining town, it is a hill town with callejones

and houses perched above the town on steep hills either side. Two 19th century neo-gothic churches dominate the centro. We found flat places to park for the night. Grant wasn't up for more walking, so I walked up to the church, where C+B were parked. The town is charming and butterfly-themed. Lots of colorful murals. Quesadillas for dinner. 49° at 8pm. Town is slowly rolling up the sidewalks for the night. Guardia Nacional truck with 3 guys patrolling. I asked a woman if it was ok to park in a particular spot, and she basically said there aren't that many people in town who need spaces, so it's ok to take one. And tourists take precedence.

Thu Feb 9

Peaceful night. 38° low. I went for a long walk around town. First up to the miner's monument, with views of the town, valley, and mountains. Then up the other side of the valley, through charming neighborhoods, brightly painted houses, more murals, to the pantheon (closed until 8 am). I'm glad I got to see the town both evening & morning. At 7:30 am the town is waking up, people greeting each other, going to work & school. In this deep valley the sun arrives late. I love this town. It reminds me a little of Bisbee, or Guanajuato or Alamos before all the buildings were restored. This is another former silver mining town.

Fabulous old buildings, many in disrepair, ancient wooden doors, iron balconies, crumbling walls. It seems like it could really attract tourists if more people knew about it. An army of street sweepers were out this morning. I even saw a police officer washing the sidewalk in front of the station.

On the road at 8:45. Many large, ornate shrines along the road. Another beautiful drive. An ex-hacienda high on a hill, with a proud white facade and crumbling adobe compound walls.

Back roads to Maravatío, then onto 150 toll road. Felt very fast & there were a lot of semis. But the libre went through Morelia and I didn't want to slog through a big city. I also wanted a break from topos, and watching for them. Carole wanted to take the libre and complained about the tolls.

Peaches & strawberries for sale along the road today.

Arrived in Capula a little after noon. Ate lunch at a street market. Everyone else had tamales. I had a delicious chicken & cheese quesadilla. There was a long line at one stall and none at the other. I asked why, and they told me the popular stall made deep fried quesadillas, but theirs were grilled. I wanted grilled, so I didn't have to wait in line!

We looked at lots of gorgeous catrinas, but none of us wanted to buy another one.

Prices also seemed high. We took the libre to Patzcuaro, which took about 30 minutes. Along the way we went through a school zone, where friendly, smiling Guardia Civil men & women in uniform were making sure everyone drove slowly. Swarms of teens walking in clumps along the road in their uniforms.

Arrived at Villa Patzcuaro campground at 2:30. Five other rigs here, including Heiko & Carla from SMA, and Swiss Erica & Claudio from SMA last year. Three Quebecois in a Promaster, a big 5th wheel, and two women in a small motorhome conversion van.

Walked to Don Chucho's to show C&B. They loved it. I bought a 1/2 litre of their homemade yogurt for 30 pesos. They also have good bread, including sourdough. They play 70s English-language light rock. All the ^{street} vendors were gone for the day.

The new building on the main street by camp still isn't quite finished. Looks like it will be shops below & ~~apartments~~ above. The Pemex & Oxxo are open. The daycare is gone.
High today 70°.

Fri Feb 10, 2023

Caught the colectivo into town at 8:45. 10 pesos. Got two corundas - one for C+B to split, and one for Grant (this time we remembered to bring a tupperware so he could bring half home). I got atole canela de leche - delicious!

Carole introduced me to cascarnes - eggs filled with confetti. you crack them over ~~the~~ people's heads at parties.

We toured the market, the two squares, 11 patios (not very many vendors open before noon), had lunch on the square (Carole + Bud treated), briefly met Susan + Mark at the Gran Hotel (where she was sketching with a group), got Grant's blood pressure checked for 30 pesos at a pharmacy, tried ~~the~~ niwes de pasta (caramelized milk ice cream - thick, rich, creamy, delicious, intense), and hit the market again for food for an appetizer gathering (pineapple, jicama, baby bananas, chicken, tortillas, quesillo cheese, and a mocha cake for Larry's birthday).

Back to camp on the colectivo at 1:30. (We ran into Larry + Nancy from San Miguel while we were in town and Nancy told me it was Larry's birthday. He is house hunting here and I invited him to meet Fred + Meg, who live here.)

Tried to shower but there's no hot water so I did a sponge bath.

Fred + Meg came at 4:30. Grant + I made quesadillas with chicken mole, salsa,

fruit, vegetables, roasted peanuts. Carole brought dolmades & veggies. When Larry & Nancy showed up we had cake. It was a really nice gathering. Fred is quite the storyteller, and Meg is so sweet. The party broke up at 6:30. I chatted with Larry for a while about his close call with esophageal cancer (caused by acid reflux) and his five Camino walks. He recommended I try the Camino del Norte - gorgeous scenery and fewer people.

Sat Feb 11, 2023

42° this morning, overcast. High 70° was perfect. Walked down the hill with C & B so the guys could try menudo. They liked it. Supposed to be good for hangovers (la cruda). 80 pesos for a bowl with fresh hot corn tortillas. The fruit, bread, and cheese stalls were open on the street. I got a 5 peso giant bolillo, and a 100 peso 1/2 kilo round of chihuahua cheese from Don Chuchos.

Back at the campground I saw Obdulia pruning bushes and gave her the cards from Marilyn. She was really touched. I asked if I could take a picture of her to send to Marilyn. She said she wanted to change first. Soon she came out looking beautiful & elegant,

in floral pants, a black shirt, a turquoise rebozo, and a beautiful beaded necklace Marilyn gave her. She told me she misses Al + Marilyn, and that many of the campers have become like family to her. She likes being able to share this beautiful place with others. She gave me a hug. She is a radiant, elegant, + beautiful woman. She says her family keeps telling her to stop working, and relax, but she likes puttering around and helping take care of the place.

At noon Fred came by on his mountain bike with his little black dog, Matcha, so she could meet Isla on neutral ground. Then we walked the short distance to their house (Casa Colibri), and visited for a while so the pups could romp. They ended up in a fight and Fred got scratched by Isla's teeth...

We took Isla back to camp then took the colectivo to town. Grant couldn't come because his blood sugar went sky high for some reason. The old man dancers were back! So Carole + Brud got to see them. There were four dancers + a guitar player, from Jarácuaro. There was a little 6-year-old girl dancer. Usually girls don't dance, so it was fun to see her breaking the mold.

I went to the ribbon store and bought a selection of ribbons for Marilyn. I went to the guitar store in Il Patios, but they didn't have strings that would fit my ukulele. Neither did Vidrio Electric. Then I got a hair cut and shampoo (\$5) at a peluquería in the market.

They were playing metal music (Rata Blanca, an 80s Argentine band) and I shared my favorite metal bands with the young kid who was playing the music. He saw Therion in Morelia last week and was still wearing the wrist band. He loved Brud's Metallica t-shirt. The stylist had beautiful silver swaths in her hair. I mentioned that I had been seeing a lot of women with silver hair coloring, and she said it is all the rage.

I had a nuez ice cream. 18 pesos (\$1) for a small cup, which was plenty. The ice cream here is so good - rich, thick, and creamy. Valentine decorations popping up in the plaza.

Carole + Brud tried Tarascan Soup at Restaurant Don Rafa, on the street between Plazas Chica + Grande. Fred had recommended it. They said it was very good.

Back to camp about 4:30. Larry told us he bought a house in Pátzcuaro! Although he doesn't plan to spend much time here.

Sunday Feb 12

43° this morning, high today 71°.

Drove up to the Mirador del Estribo Grande. C+B loved the view of the lake. Drove to Tzintzuntzan, passing the Camino Real restaurant (Tarascan Soup) at the Mobil Station. Saw many horses gathering at the turnoff, in Tzurumútaro. They were

riding to Tzintzuntzan for the fiesta del Señor del Rescate, happening Feb 12-15.

Arrived at Las Yácatas Zona Arqueológica at 10 am. 90 peso (\$4.50) admission fee. We pretty much had the place to ourselves. Beautiful day, views of lake, town, mountains all around. Five round "pyramids" on top of a huge stone platform. Museum with diorama, artifacts.

Drove into town and parked next to the church. Lots of preparation for the fiesta. The main day is the Tuesday before Shrove Tuesday. Pilgrims come from all over the region. Live music, fireworks, carnival rides. The painting of El Señor del Rescate (Jesus), which supposedly ended a smallpox epidemic in the 1700s, was set up on a stage filled with flowers, and an altar in front. Inside the church they were blessing people by placing a silver crown on their head & ringing a loud bell. An older woman told us all about the festivities that would be happening over the next four days. She said a group of bicycle pilgrims would arrive soon and there would be a mass. She said people from Tzu are friendly and welcoming. I told her she was a good ambassador for her town. They had plastic bottles of holy water for a donation.

We went off to look for lunch just as the bicycle pilgrims arrived. Some had come from as far as Morelia. They wore bicycle jerseys with their group names.

We grabbed a quick lunch at a torta place nearby. Big tasty chicken & cheese sandwiches for

two dollars each. Back at the main church yard they were having a mass. The bicycle riders got blessed, and the horse riders as well (but not the horses!). We talked to one of the riders who had lived in California for many (20?) years and spoke pretty good English. He owns a ranch near Pátzcuaro. He was so friendly.

Guys were prepping big firecracker wheels for the fiesta, but when we asked when they would go off, they said they were for some kind of private use Monday + Wednesday. Confusing.

Walked around the artisanal market, where they sell locally woven baskets and colorful woven garlands. Also the local chocolate brown or deep green pottery.

~~left~~ Visited the old cemetery, a jumble of crowded graves, many of them just mounds of earth, with faded wreaths probably left from Day of the Dead.

Back to the church for ice cream: avocado ~~for~~ for Grant + pasta for me (not as rich as in PTZ).

We left town about 2 and took the slow road along the lake via Tarerío, Cucuchucho, and Ihuatzio. A beautiful drive with little traffic, and great views of the lake. As we left TZN, a guy pointed at our license plate, smiled, and approached. In English he said, "I lived in Tacoma!" So many friendly people here.

After a while we came upon the

bicycle pilgrims in a long line, with a police car in front and an ambulance in the rear. We followed them for a few kilometers until they turned off into a town.

Arrived at Santa Muerte Santuario in Santa Ana del Chapitiro at 3:36. C+B loved it there. Left at 4:20, back to camp at 4:35.

(At the yácatas there were vendors selling ceramic whistles to make animal sounds. The ones shaped and painted like jaguar heads made terrifyingly eerie sounds like a jaguar keening or threatening.)

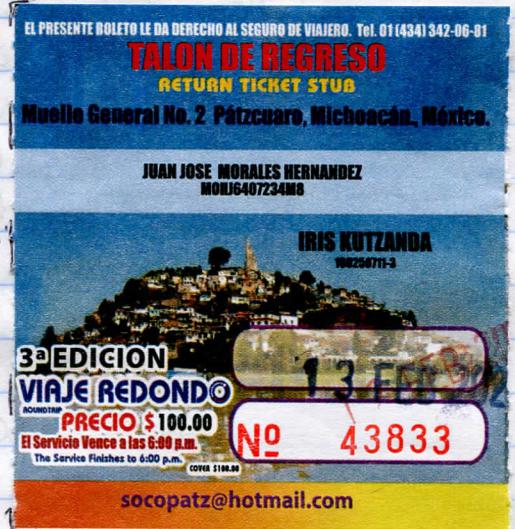
Mon Feb 13, 2023

87th

Happy ^ Birthday in heaven, dad. I miss you.

41° this morning. Jaritzio Island boat trip today. Grant didn't want to come. C+B and I walked down to the Muelle General, one mile away. 100p each to the island and back (\$5). The boats hold 50 people. Long, narrow, wood, with a roof & wood benches.

The driver had no helper, and did his own casting off and docking. The lake water is brown from erosion. Lots of white pelicans & great egrets. It was delightful being out on the lake. The boat rides low in the water. Reeds growing along the shore (used for basket making?). Lots of water



lilies (apparently they are not a good thing). Fishing boats of different sizes, with & without motors. ~~A~~ lines of wooden stakes holding ~~a~~ nets, a guy in a small wooden boat pulling himself along the net and pulling it up to check for fish.

The boat ride is 30 minutes. As we approached the island a group of fishing boats gave a demo with their butterfly-shaped nets. I was glad to see it and to tip the guy who climbed onto the outside of the boats and came around to each opening. People also tipped the boat driver.

It was fun to be on an island. There are no cars. It reminded me of Greece.

Coming early on a Monday worked well, as there were no other tourists and most of the trinket shops weren't open. You walk up either ³⁰⁵ stairs (multiple options) or a smooth road ⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾ to the top of the small island. There is a tall statue of Independence hero José María Morelos. You can climb up stairs inside, but I decided not to. Wish I had because apparently you can see the whole lake from up there.

A procession of young women dressed in traditional outfits was carrying incense, flowers, and an image of Mary (I think). They processed into a building. A large group of people in traditional dress followed.

The women were beautifully dressed in brightly-colored ~~pleated~~ pleated skirts and striped shawls, over shirts embroidered with

Janitzio

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flowers. They had confetti in their long black hair. The top of the island had a big plaza, a playground, sweeping views, and many restaurants with views. We had trascalan soup and split a plate of fried + breaded whitefish. Both were delicious. The soup is a bit spicy for me, alas, but I love it. Topped with quesillo cheese and fried crispy tortilla strips. We were a little concerned because there was no water in the bathroom, and we wondered about kitchen hygiene... How do they get water on such a tiny island, and where does sewage go? We saw a garbage barge tied up. I wonder where that goes?

We arrived on the island around 10, and were on the boat at 12:45. It was windy and the lake was a bit choppy. A trio of musicians played on the way back (guitar, bass, accordion) and asked for tips.

Lake PTZ is polluted but work is ongoing to clean it up. Supposedly PTZ has banned single use plastic bags + straws.

Combi back to camp at 1:30. Twelve rigs here now! More Quebecois, more young people. Several people are sick with vomiting and diarrhea. Cause unknown. Yakisoba for dinner (stir fry vegetables with noodles). Still no water for showers. High today 71°.

Tues Feb. 14

The showers have been broken the whole time we've been here. Frustrating. They keep

working on them, but no fix yet.
41° this morning. Left at 8:30 for Santa Clara. Arrived at 9 and most things were still closed. They do not sell atole here. They do sell ~~milk~~ cornudas in a cup. This is our third time here and we were bored. The copper items are beautiful, but it's kind of overwhelming, especially if you don't want to buy anything. We left about 12:30. C+B drove around Lake Zirahuen.

Back at camp I slept for a while. I feel exhausted & low energy today. We walked up Ahuehuetes Street, past Fred & Meg's, to Don Alfredo Pollo on the roundabout by Aurrera Bodega. The chickens are tiny, cooked over a fire (not a rotisserie) and cost 165 pesos (over \$8). Pricy. Grabbed yogurt and soft serve ice cream at Aurrera.

Fried potatoes and (dry) chicken for dinner. Collectivo to town for Valentine's Day concert. Rondalla guitar group was great, though they had occasional off-key moments. Got a small ^{fruit} nut muffin each - tasty. Second band was too loud so we headed back to camp. The driver had his wife and two kids up front. The littlest was adorable, smiling at everyone, and trying to climb everywhere. Mom looked a bit frazzled. High today 70° and a bit overcast.

PTZ

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Wed Feb 15, 2023

36° this morning! As soon as the sun hit the campground (not until almost 8) all the campers came out & stood in the sun like lizards. 8:45 C+B+I walked to Tiendita Verde, a Mexican-owned organic food store & restaurant in an oasis-like garden with a fountain. C+B treated me to a wonderful breakfast of veggie quiche, ~~sau~~ guacamole, and salad. They went back to camp and I walked to the Estribo Chico mirador, just a 20-minute walk from camp. Beautiful walk on an empty cobblestone tree-lined road, no cars or people. At the top is a beautiful view of the lake & Janitzio Island.

Before lunch I walked to Don Chuchos to get some good bread. Partial whole wheat sourdough (semi-blanco masa ~~madre~~ ^{madre}) for 65 pesos (\$3.25), is delicious. Don Chuchos seemed so far last year, but this year it seems just across the street.

Grant & I walked to town, up Obregón street to the market. Long lines at the haircut places for Grant. I looked for jeans (no luck), we had ice cream (of course), and walked to Plaza San Francisco, in the Ibarra neighborhood west of Plaza Grande. Saw murals in a hotel courtyard. Got cash, and headed back to camp. Grant's blood sugar went low & he felt dizzy.

Obdulia said she used to take her kids up to the Estribo Chico mirador with a picnic, and it was quiet and empty then too. She also recommended Yunuen Island as a quiet and

lovely place to visit & wander.

Komi, Rose, & Felix left today. They've all been sick for a few days & were eager for a change of scenery. They are young people from Quebec. Marilyn wrote to make sure we meet their friends Jerry & Paula (Nova Scotia) and Tuck & Terri (Colorado). I had nice chats with them. I remembered meeting Paula & Jerry two(?) years ago. I really like her.

I made a really delicious dinner: leftovers chicken & rice (from the chicken place) & quesillo (Oaxaca cheese) quesadillas with crema. Delicious!

Thurs Feb 16

40° this morning.

Colectivo to town at 8:30 for corunda and atole. Checked out breakfast market at Plaza San Francisco. Corundas, atole, and more. Walked up to the viewing platform (Mirador Madrigal de las Altas Torres). Lovely view over town. Then up the hill through interesting neighborhoods to Rancho La Mesa campground. It's beautiful up there, with a view over town & the lake, a restaurant with a view, charming wood cabins, topiary hedges that spell "Bienvenidos" and "Rancho la Mesa," fun statues, and lots of animals - dogs, roosters, sheep, horses, mom & baby donkey. A kind man saw us going the wrong way, and explained that that gate was not in use,

and how to get to the correct gate.

The walk back to Centro took about 30 mins. and was all downhill. We took a slightly different route that dropped us right by Plaza Chica.

The Rancho campground is lovely, but expensive (400p, \$20), the field has no trees or shade, there are few campers (none today), and it's far from town & colectivos.

Stopped on the way down at a friendly store for tomato, cuke, & baby bananas.

I'd been looking for jeans, and Grant spotted a store full of them near Plaza Chica (Blas Boutique, Calle Lloreda #17A). They had my style (boot cut = corte de bota) for 295p, or only \$15.

Grabbed cans of beans at Bodega Aurrera. Walked all the way back to camp. Total today 5 miles at least. Guys installing new hot water heater, but the showers still don't work. Gave Grant a shampoo and haircut. Broke camp. Paid (10% discount for staying a week or longer). Warm day, 74°.

Brud & Carole took us out for dinner (again!) to Don Rafa. Grant liked his enchiladas placeras (stuffed with chicken, potatoes, and veggies) and my pollo empanizado was thin, crispy, and not greasy. Said Goodbye to C+B. Hard to imagine we'll be on our own again after ~~5~~^{7.5} weeks of togetherness.

120

Lake Chapala

Tolls 220 p = \$11
3363 total so far

Fri Feb 17, 2023

43°. On the road at 7. Highway 120 to Quiroga, then 15 north through beautiful pine forest, on a mostly empty road. Through Zacapu, which has a large carved stone arch entryway, Arc d' Triomphe-shaped. In Jimenez, after about an hour and a half, we got on the 15 D toll road. Lots of trucks, but it was nice to have a break from topes.

People often think we're a combi and try to flag us down for a ride.

Dusty, smoky air today. Big tan-colored squash for sale along the road, large sacks of onions, sweet potatoes, watermelon.

Off the toll road ~~and~~ at La Barca and down through Sahuaya to the road that runs along the south shore of Lake Chapala. 15 N, the road along the lake, starts out rough, but eventually gets better. Beautiful scenery, but narrow and a bit scary due to dropoffs.

Arrived at "Igloo Kokolo" at noon. Gorgeous place! Not well marked, so at first we passed it by. It's an eco center. Campers are welcome if you make reservations & they aren't hosting a retreat or event. Gorgeous view of lake Chapala. You can see Ajijic to the left & Chapala to the right. It's owned by a handsome & friendly young couple, Salvador & Jennifer. He inherited the land from his father. They've been working on it for 14 years, creating an

eco-friendly retreat center and get-away. They met in London where they were both learning English. She is from Spain. They have two kids and live in the nearby town. They hope to move to this property, and have begun building a house.

There is one other rig here, a big man truck with a Swiss couple, Johnny + Fabia.

Salvador + Jennifer have built terraced rock gardens, igloos made with sacks of sand plastered with cement and painted in muted rainbow colors (sleeping cabins), a big round kitchen made with earth walls + a thatch roof, ~~a~~ big palapas (perfect for yoga or meditation groups, ~~or~~ or just hanging out), composting toilets, wood-fired showers. Bottles in the earth walls create glowing multi-colored designs. Besides yoga + meditation retreats, + regular guests, they host workshops to teach people how to do all these eco things. Jennifer loves to cook and makes healthy vegetarian food for groups that come.

Lots of birds here. We learned that female Vermilion flycatchers are grey with orange bellies. Jennifer says October is the best month here, and in most of Mexico, because it's green, the brief evening rainstorms with lightning are spectacular, and the temps are perfect.

Christian, an American guy from Chapala, is staying here. He says the lake is getting cleaner, and this end is in good shape, with healthy and edible fish. It's not a deep lake.

I walked the rocky trail about 10 minutes down to the lake. Rocky shore with many willows

standing in the water. Closed in, but cool & fresh, with the sound of water whooshing over the rocks. 79° but feels cool in the shade. Nice breeze. We're at about 5000 feet.

Sky & Bobbi & Mary finally arrived about 4:15. Mary got stopped by a guy who said she scraped his car on a very narrow street. He threatened to call the police. She paid him 1000 pesos (#50). She was frazzled. Sky was frazzled too from all the bumpy roads, and upset that the parking here wasn't level. While everyone calmed down & settled in, I took a nice hot shower (my first shower since San Miguel!).

After dinner Sky & Bobbi & I played music & sang harmonies. Bobbi was low energy so we didn't play long. 69° here at 9:30 pm! A lovely soft breeze blowing.

Sat Feb 18, 2023

54° this morning feels delightful after the cold in Pátzcuaro. A cactus wren is singing. On the road at 7:45. Some low branches scraped the van on the driveway out. San Luis Soyatlan is the town with the extra narrow road, where Mary had the mishap. We got through no problem (less traffic early, and we're narrow and have retractable mirrors). We took highway 80 through Villa Corona, closing the loop and beginning to retrace our steps northward.

Etzatlán

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Lots of sugar cane, mixed quality road, sometimes rough & narrow. Grant said it felt a bit dangerous. Then we got on 70 toward Saucedá, and it was a great road: smooth, light traffic, beautiful agricultural scenery. Fields of agave & sugarcane. Smoky smell & hazy air from burning cane fields. Clouds of egrets following tractors tilling fields, like feathery white sea foam. Highway 4 to Etzatlán is also a beautiful & good road.

We arrived at Delia's (Campadritos) campground at 10:30. Bonnie explained the day's carnival events. We walked to the horse arena (Lienzo Charro), which is very close to the campground. Like a mini county fair, with animals on display (for prizes), a petting zoo, food vendors, a mechanical bull, and vendors selling riding gear & hats. We paid 60p each for a ticket & went into the arena. The "Escaramuza Caballo de Palo" (small girls in cowgirl skirts & hats doing routines with stick ponies) was supposed to start at 11. Instead we watched nattily-attired rodeo riders practicing herding and speed stops in clouds of dust. Very fun to watch. We were told the girls wouldn't perform until about 1:30, so at noon we walked downtown, following the world's largest crocheted street canopy for many blocks to the Plaza de Armas. The plaza was a bustle with vendors, a big stage, and people. A big tent with tables was for the "convite", food provided by a local family. On the way to the square we passed the staging area for



Rodeo
ticket

the parade. The "mojigangas" are guys dressed as girls, wearing makeup + brightly-colored wigs. There is also an "ugly king." They posed for a picture.

The street canopy is made of colorful raffia crocheted into hexagons. It creates dappled shade + is quite beautiful.

Waiting for the parade to arrive at the square, I bought a bag of potato chips (not salty - most people eat them with hot sauce) from a vendor who spoke great English. A little while later another guy wanted to chat in perfect English. He lives in Denver. He said about 25% of the people in town right now are Americans coming home to visit family for Carnaval.

The parade arrived and it was great. The dancing mojigangas; a band; Miss Etzatlán and her entourage, all in lovely traditional dresses and tiaras; and charro riders on dancing horses. An enormous prize cow was decorated with bows. A large - and deafeningly loud - brass band began to play, the

Tolls ETZ to MAZ 1480p = \$74!!!

ETZ

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mojigangas danced, and soon others joined in. It was a necessity (for us) to have earplugs! After a while we went back to the arena, but the girls had already performed. It was hot (84 today) so we made our way back to camp, about 2:30. Paid Bonnie (250p = \$12.50), then sat in the shade with a cool breeze.

It was 4 miles roundtrip to town + back.

Bonnie says she has counted 30 bands playing in the square at the same time during Carnival!

Tomorrow is the big day. A carload of young people pulled in, set up a tent, and headed into town. Possibly from Guadalajara, only an hour away. Amazing (surprising) that we heard no cohetes (firework rockets) today. Sugar cane ash falling from the sky all afternoon. This is a lovely campground, green + shady, with hens + dogs + cats running around. Bilingual Bonnie is very sweet.

Sunday Feb 19, 2023

51°. On the road 7:30. Road 612 smooth, thru lovely ag country, sunrise, few cars. In general Jalisco prides itself on having good roads. After 30 minutes we got on the 15D toll road. Beautiful mountains, columnar cactus, curves + downhill, malpais rock swaths, pine trees. It's Carnival Sunday so traffic seemed lighter. Still plenty of trucks though. Scenery got greener along the coast. Stopped for lunch at the Pemex where we spent the night on our way

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Tolls 1106 p = \$55

south after "escaping" Sinaloa. There had been a long line at the Subway for dinner; today the place was empty.

Palm trees, coastal lowlands, cluster of wood storks floating in the air, mountains forming a border to the east. Warm, high 80s.

Fruit inspection at the Sinaloa border surprised us. They also asked about eggs.

Tolls VERY high today - \$74!!!

Arrived at Paul + Trish's in Mazatlan at 12:45 (we switched to ~~Pacific~~ Mountain Time). Took them to dinner at Taco Time, a taco stand walking distance from their house. 79° high today with a cool breeze.

Chatted til almost 9:30. The restaurant tonight was playing American light rock + classic rock - did not feel like I was in Mexico. \$40 with tip. Grant's beef + pork quesadillas were best he had in Mexico. My potato chunks with pork + cheese also very good.

Mon. Feb 20, 2023

65°. Walk 40 minutes on trail in front of condo. Cool but noisy, with cars flying by. On the road at 7:30. Sinaloa roads suck. Potholes, patches, rough + tiring, loud. ~~Three~~ Two fruit inspections today. Reached Sinaloa border at 2 pm. Sonora roads are smooth + nice! Stopped to buy fried banana chips (45 p = \$2.25 for a bag). Stopped at 2:45 + napped for 20 minutes. Back on the road at 3:15. Pitaya country, a few saguaro, jagged mountains to the east. Clouds high in the sky

Tucson Arizona

Tolls 354 p = \$18

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beginning about Ciudad Obregon. The road through Vicam(?) was terrible! 5:40 stopped at the 24-hour Arco near Empalme, at the south cutoff to Guaymas. Rice, beans, and leftover potatoes + meat for dinner. 66°. We're wiped. 9 hours of actual driving today, 10 hours on the road.

Tues Feb 21

It was a fine place to sleep, not too noisy with earplugs. It rained in the night. 60° + cloudy this morning. Awake at 5, on the road by 7. Fog for a while, then rain off and on for the rest of the drive.

Military inspection at km 112 south of Santa Ana. They were really searching some cars.

I've noticed more Mexicans smoking on this trip.

The road got worse around Santa Ana.

It's an "easy" 2-day drive from MAZ to the border. Navojoa is halfway. We went farther the first day, so we had a relatively short drive today.

After you pass km 21 visa station, there's a few choice points. (We opted not to turn in our 10-year TIP vehicle permit.) Follow signs to "Frontera USA," then watch for a small yellow sign that says "USA." Do not follow the trucks to the right.

Reached the border at 12:25. A guy told us to go in the RV lane, which was very short. We had a more thorough agricultural

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inspection. We had to give them our one remaining russet potato. Done in 20 minutes, at 12:45 - fastest crossing ever.

Fry's in Tucson for a few groceries, including a bagged Caesar salad, which tasted great. Gassed up for \$3.03 a gallon (Mexico averages \$4.50). Tried to go to the Presidio historic district to walk, but all parking is pay - too much hassle. Instead we went to Sweetwater Wetlands Park and walked. Lovely there, lots of birds, but raining - glad we had umbrellas!

El Guerro Canela on Oracle for dinner.

Not very good. Alamos hot dogs are better. Forgot that RAM insurance doesn't turn on until tomorrow - yikes! White knuckled it to Pilot north of Tucson, through rain + heavy traffic. 55° at 7 pm.

Wed Feb 22

Quiet night except for wind shaking the van. 56° + raining. Lots of other rigs here. On the road 7:20. Arrive at mom's 8:40. Showers, laundry, clean condo for David's arrival. After lunch drove to Mark's to help him get ready for Ian + Colin to stay there. He's remodeling, so the place is ~~isn't~~ just done enough to have water + electricity. I washed floor + door, made up a bed, and cleared a debris pile off the patio.

Scottsdale

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Mom made pork chops & mashed potatoes for dinner. I finally got a ukulele ~~string~~ string to replace the broken one.

Thurs Feb 23

Nice walk. Grocery shopping & Subaru driving lesson with mom. Pick up David & Annie & Ava at airport at 2. Pizza party at mom's clubhouse with Pete Donna Zoe Michael Christine Denise Emma Casey Mark David Annie Ava Mom Grant Ian Lina me. Ian & Lina didn't arrive until 8:15. Their uber from airport cost \$60! To bed at 10. Annie graciously drove them to Mark's, as I was too tired. I broke a tooth "ä

Fri Feb 24

44°. Pick up rental car. Hyundai Elantra. \$200 for 3 days. Ian & Lina to grandma's for dinner. Roasted brussel sprouts, caesar salad, rice & quinoa for those who didn't want leftovers pizza (quite tasty). Picked up Colin at airport. Very stressful because first we were on the wrong side of the terminal (even doors are south & odd doors are north) and the parking enforcers start blowing whistles & shining lights & yelling at you if you stop for more than three seconds. Then it happened when we drove around to the correct side. Really

harrassing! I was driving the rental car. My night vision isn't great anymore, there was lots of traffic & difficult navigation, and it was a long drive way out to JD's family house for the pre-wedding party. White knuckles.

Lots of people at the party. Out in yard clustered around heaters. Loud, no place to sit. Left about 9:30 with Ian & Lina. To bed about 11.

Sat Feb 25

50° this morning, blue sky. Picked the ~~boys~~^{boys} up at Mark's at 2, drove to wedding in Heritage Park at Lathe House. \$15 pay parking only. I was in a foul mood. So tired of big loud gatherings and no alone time. Wedding of niece Casey was nice, Emma did a great job officiating. Very loud music. Grant had to leave to go back to Mark's after dinner to put insulin in his pump. Ian & Colin decided to stay late & take an Uber back. Grant picked me up about 8:30. We had plugged the van in at Mark's, so had to go back there to pick it up. Perfect weather, high 74° today. A little wind but no rain. The young crowd was partying like mad, drinking and dancing.

Scottsdale

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Sunday Feb 26, 2023

43°, lots of night rain. Open house at Denise's. Took family photo. Drove Colin to Mark's to nap, then took Ian & Lina to McDowell Gateway trail. The desert is so green this year. Back to grandma's for food. Susan & Kylie there. Drove Ian & Lina back to Mark's. Cold today, lots of clouds.

Mon Feb 27

38°. Shop for food for us & mom, gas up cars, return rental car. Drive David et al to airport. Visit with Mike & Cathy Mockler. Colin & Mark went mountain biking and came over for a late dinner of leftover meatloaf & mac 'n cheese.

Tues Feb 28

42°. Drive Colin to airport. Help Mark with cleaning, laundry, dump run. The Pima Salt Flats landfill is a depressing place. So much garbage! Residents get free dump allotments. Mark came to mom's for a salmon dinner. I helped him wrangle his cats into carriers so he could take them home (they've stayed at mom's during the remodel. Sad goodbye to mom, who will now be all alone.

Wed Mar 1, 2023

49°. On the road at 6:08. Arrived at the border about 9:30 and napped for 45 minutes. Arrived at Dr. Salinas's at 11:15 and was out of there at 12:45. Grant got a pastor grande quesadilla ^{flour tortilla} (70 pesos) and said it was excellent. He also found a grocery store and bought some of his Mexican favorites: bimbo, quesillo, crema, chicharon. Rainy, windy, & cold standing in line. Dr. Salinas & Irene came by & picked us up when we still had 10 or 15 minutes to go. They didn't even check our passports at the exit, just waved us all through!

Gas at Love's in Yuma, and hanging out before going to Denise's. Arrived at 4:30. Poring rain. Denise made a great dinner of enchilada casserole, coleslaw, (dressing of mayo, balsamic, sugar, garlic powder), & apple & blueberry galette with ice cream. Delicious! Then we watched the recent Dune movie, which was great.

Thurs Mar 2

44°. Glad for electric heater! Denise fed us a wonderful breakfast of eggs, croissants, Silvana Meats bacon. On the road at 10:15. Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Site on the Colorado River was worth the \$8 senior entrance fee. Well done museum, video, interpretive signs, and preserved cell blocks.

Then we walked on the Yuma East Wetlands trail, which is really nice. You can walk a long way on a dirt trail along the river through restored habitat. There appears to be free overnight parking with restrooms.

We drove to Cibola Natl. Wildlife Refuge, about 75 mins. north of Yuma via Ogilby Road, highway 78, then across the Colorado River. It's a beautiful refuge with lots of Sandhill cranes, snow geese, kestrels, ducks. A one-mile nature trail to duck blinds on the river, and a nice driving tour with closeup views of the geese, ^{lots of redwinged blackbirds,}

Spending the night at "Hippie Hole," a free spot on the river on the north edge of the refuge. Peaceful, only a few other rigs.

Fri Mar 3

40°, cloudless blue sky. Drive to Cibola nature trail. Cranes gabbling loudly and taking off in clusters. Gnatcatchers in the forest. Thousands of widgeons on the river. Coyote trotting across a field with something in its mouth, then stopping to place it on the ground and tear at it. Coyotes yipping frenziedly nearby. A roadrunner dashed across the road. Back to Algodones. A few ocotillo blooming. Arrive dentist 11:30, leave 12:08 with my new crown (zirconium, \$600), on the road at 1:05, so less than an hour at the border. Dr. gave me one prednisone to reduce inflammation & protect the tooth nerve. Ibuprofen for a day or two after that.

Red Earth gas on 86 about 40 mi south of

Indio was \$4.09 vs. 4:50⁺ everywhere else (because it's on tribal land). We got date shakes at Shield's in Indio. We'd never tried them before but Mary Preus recommended. Delicious but too big! 21 oz. for \$7.95. We easily could have split one. Next time I'll have a single scoop of date ice cream. It's a fun place with lots of food gifts and date-related tchotchkes, everything pricey. A fun stop though.

Vons for groceries. Parked for the night at the Bump & Grind trailhead behind Target in Palm Desert. Caesar salad with chicken for dinner (only salad for me; still full from the shake!). Dark at 6:15. High today 69°.

Sat Mar 4

46°. Light at 6. Clear blue sky. Nice walking trails here. As we walked thru the parking lot to use the Target restroom, a roadrunner trotted along about 10 feet away, its tail lifting and falling along with its head crest. We had lots of time to observe it up close. So cute. I love how their feet pump when running, just like in the cartoons. Lots of hikers here, many in large groups. I did my tai chi in a quiet spot with mockingbirds chattering.

Debbie Sinick & David's house for a delicious lunch of turkey sandwiches on whole grain sourdough, sweet potato chips, coleslaw, and homemade banana bread. Debbie is feeling poorly due to a-fib, and her eyes are still very light-

sensitive due to her concussions. Said goodbye about 2 & drove to Redlands, arriving at Gretchen's dogsitting house about 4:30. It's on Dwight St in a beautiful neighborhood with big lots. A huge Spanish-style house filled with art, textiles, tiles, & talavera. Rudi came over and they made us grilled chicken & vegetables, baguette, salad, pea soup, and an amazing chocolate cake with raspberries & buttercream from Michelle's to celebrate Rudi's 68th. I sat in the in-ground hot tub in their resort-like backyard—bliss! In the morning Gretchen, Grant, and I went for a walk to Caroline's Park, a beautiful natural area with a great view of the snow-covered mountains (through the clouds). She's sitting for French bulldogs Junie & JJ, and they came walking too. Cool & cloudy but no rain. They've had a cold winter.

Sun Mar 5

See above for our morning walk. On the road at 10 headed for LA to visit Dan. Heavy rain, heavy traffic, heavy stress. But the rain stopped, and we found a free parking spot (it being Sunday) right in front of his building. After lunch at his studio apartment (which has a great view of a park and downtown), we went for a long walk around downtown LA. Many ~~bea~~ ornate art deco buildings; a movie being filmed; charming Little Tokyo, where we tried imagawayaki, chewy muffins filled with

red bean paste; noisy, jampacked Grand Central Market. Said goodbye at 3:30 and slogged our way through heavy traffic onto I-5 north. The Grapevine (Tejon Pass) was open after being closed due to a blizzard (one lane was closed in one spot due to a mudslide). The hills were so green. Nut trees covered in pink blossoms. Arrived at Buttonwillow rest area at 6 pm. Rain off & on while driving, sometimes quite heavy.

Mon Mar 6

40°, blue sky. Quiet night. On the road at 7. Pink clouds of nut tree blossoms along road. The hills a brilliant green with swaths of yellow flowers - mustard? Grant wanted to avoid Modesto & Stockton so we took 580 then 680 thru Walnut Creek & Vacaville to Winters. Not worth it: lots of traffic & a toll (Grant liked it because there were no slowdowns & it was a change from I-5). Lunch with Kathleen, Richard, & mo at Steady Eddy's Cafe (\$30 for mediocre sandwiches). Kathleen may have to cut down her walnut trees because they aren't producing well due to the extreme summer heat, and cost more to maintain than they're worth. She'd have to pay \$75 a month to have them maintained, and get no proceeds from the harvest. (Her current farmer is retiring - he used to split the harvest proceeds with her.) She can't leave them standing because they will get diseases that could spread to neighbors' trees, and when they die they will fall over.

Grant & I walked on the river trail and back through a neighborhood. Chilly but sunny. It's kind of a short trail, but paved & lovely. Quick stop at the grocery store, then we drove 2.5 hours to Moss Cove rest area on highway 101. We arrived at 6 pm, just as it was getting dark. We didn't want to sleep in Redding tonight, because it's cold & snowy there, but come to find out it's cold & snowy here too! We're at 1100 feet.

Highway 16 from Winters to highway 20 is gorgeous! Spring flowers & green grass on the hillsides, and Rumsey Canyon has a river. Really beautiful scenery! Very landslide prone, however, with piles of debris right up to the fog line in many places. Quite a few BLM campgrounds. Highway 20 past Clear Lake is a busier road, and it was raining a lot. No signal at Moss Cove rest area.

Tue Mar 7

34°, dusting of snow. On the road 6:30. Overcast. Lots of precip in the night. Glad for our propane heater. Soon it was 33° and snowing, then 32°... Herd of elk grazing by the road. At Leggett we entered the redwoods and dropped below the snowline. Lots of tree debris from

many fallen trees cleared off the road. We stopped at a gas station and they told us their power had been out for 13 days!

Lots of rain today. Gas \$5.09 ~~at~~ the Bear River tribal casino south of Eureka (\$5.49+ everywhere else). WinCo in Eureka for groceries. More rain and 39°. Big Lagoon county park just north of town for lunch. \$3 parking for seniors. Nice spot on the ocean. They also have camping. The rain stopped but it was too cold to walk.

In Brookings we took shelter from a hailstorm at the Bell & Whistle Cafe in the harbor. Cozy, but uncomfortable chairs and 90s emo rock that got on our nerves after a while. At Arch Point scenic viewpoint I walked loops on the trail while Grant napped. No rain!

There's no signal here, so we moved north to Meyers Creek Beach Viewpoint just north of Pistol River. Unlike most pullouts along 101, there are no signs prohibiting overnight parking. 42° at 7 pm. Light rain off & on. Beautiful view of sandy beach, waves, sea stacks.

Wed Mar 8

34°, rained most of the night. On the road at 6:40. Lots of boondocking spots along the south Oregon coast. At Gold Beach the road goes inland most of the way to Florence. ~~Extra~~ Still more pleasant than I-5! Rainy day. Stopped at an old Fred Meyer in Coos Bay. Skunk cabbage blooming along the road! Long detour to a Tractor Supply to look for a zip hoodie for Grant - no luck. Arrived Al + Marilyn's at 2 pm. Lots of fun swapping Mexico stories. Amazing taco salads for dinner: chips, grilled chicken, beans, rice, lettuce with vinaigrette, guac, cheese, salsa, sour cream, and caramelized cabbage (delicious). Marilyn taught me her tai chi routine and gave me a beautiful ceramic heart she made.

Thurs Mar 9

40°. On the road 8:35, after a nice chat with Al + Marilyn. Stops for gas, lunch, groceries. Non-stop rain. Short accident delay south of Portland. Rain stops shortly after entering Washington. And starts again... And stops! Home 3:15.