

June 10-17, 2013- Sedona & Grand Canyon, AZ

Sometimes things just seem to work out. A year ago, when we were on our way to Russia, on the first outbound flight leg from Florida to Atlanta, we volunteered to give up our seats for a later flight. Since we had a 7 hour layover in ATL this was not an imposition. In gratitude, Delta gave us each a \$400 voucher credit. I just redeemed mine for a trip to Phoenix, as a jumping off point for further exploration of the far West. I had always wanted to see the red rocks around Sedona, Arizona, but really planned to haul my little airplane up there with my motorhome so as to be able to do some flying in this scenic part of the country. However diesel fuel, for the RV alone, would have exceeded \$4,000 for the trip. I elected instead to “fly the friendly skies” and rent both a car and a plane for my sightseeing adventures.

This area undoubtedly has to be one of the more beautiful parts of the US that I have encountered. The Sky Ranch Resort, located right on the Sedona airport property provided both a phenomenal view of the rocks, spires and buttes as well as an excellent restaurant with runway views. Rental of a Cessna Skyhawk gave me a totally different perspective of the natural beauty found all around me. To paraphrase an old Judy Collins song, I “saw rocks from both sides now”. The days were spent exploring the area as well as experiencing the Southwestern quality of life. Sights included the man built Chapel of the Holy Cross which was incorporated into the spectacular rocks, to just one of the areas four spiritual “vortexes”, which happened to be located immediately down from the airport. These “vortex fields” are reputed to impart an extraordinary and uplifting swirling mass of energy from the earth below into those who tread above. It worked for me. I had plenty of energy to climb up that 300 foot high hill. However coming back down the steep, rocky and slippery slope without falling and breaking something... well, that was another story. We finished our second day with a drive over to nearby Palatki to wander through some ancient Indian ruins. You might even say that it “ruined my day”.

Next was the winding, with switchbacks, drive over to Flagstaff, on the road to the Grand Canyon. But along the way a stop at the Walnut Canyon National Monument was in order. Here one could explore more cliff dwellings of early native Americans who built their entire communities, back in 1,000 A.D., into these impenetrable rock walls. It was quite a hike down into the canyon and then back up, but well worth the energy that I expended. (I guess that I still had some left over from the Sedona Vortexes.)

I had been to the Grand Canyon several times previously, and it is always an impressive sight. This trip was no exception, but it was made even more special with a hike along the south rim. Along the way we encountered mid 80 deg. temperatures which quickly dropped over 10 degrees with the onset of a short thundershower that produced pea sized hail. Wildlife seen along the way included the Abert's squirrel, which was grey, white and red in color, the ubiquitous Mule Deer, and the Canyon's Black Hawk. But the Highlight of this hiking adventure occurred at 7:45 PM when the sun set beyond the northern rim, way off in the west. This was truly a spectacular sight and one which made the entire trip worthwhile. If you don't count my flying, that is.



I rented this Cessna Skyhawk for my aerial tour



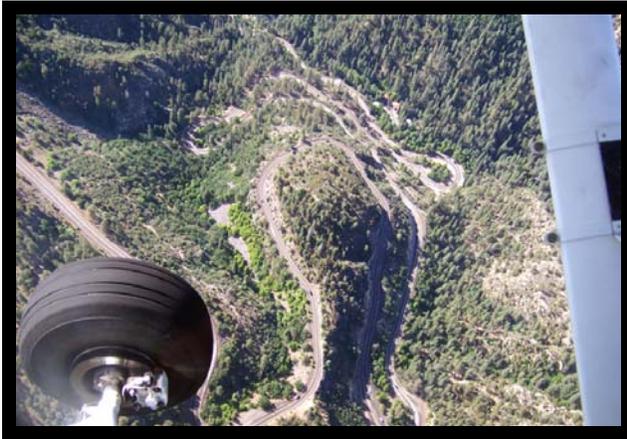
Sedona Airport with the city and rocks just beyond



There certainly was some rugged country below me



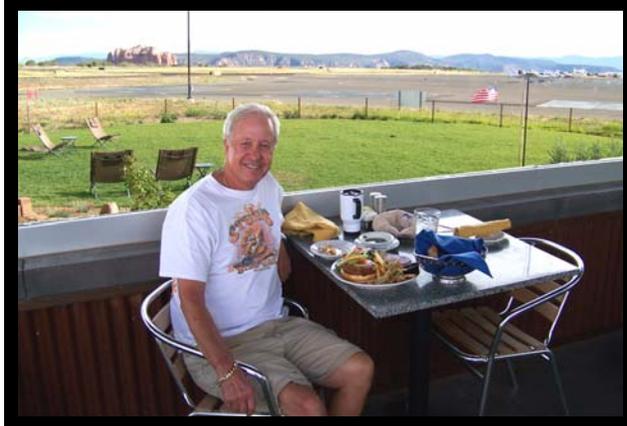
Flying, I got to see rocks, rocks and more rocks



I would later be driving on this very winding road



More red rocks, now seen from ground level.



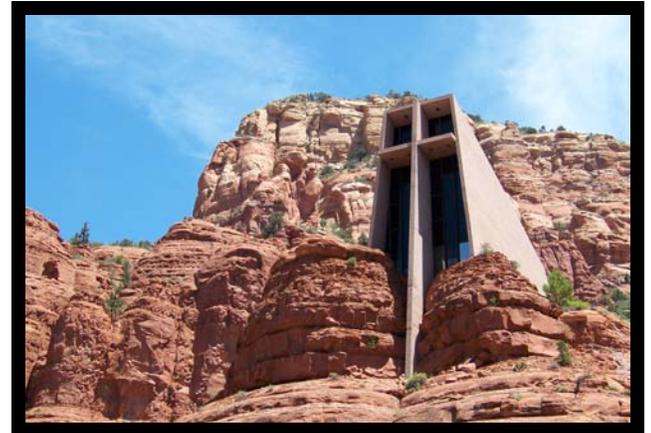
Lunch was taken at the Sedona Airport Mesa Grill



There was beauty located all around me in Sedona



Twisted Junipers "attest" to the Vortexes power



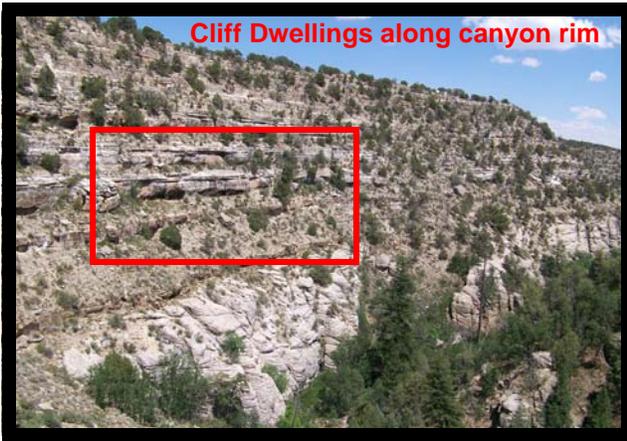
Sedona's inspiring "Chapel of the Holy Cross"



Sinagua Indian cliff dwellings ruins at Palatki



Their cave drawings date back a millennia or more



Walnut Canyon and the cliff dwelling community



Close-up view into a typical cliff dwelling "home"



Flagstaff's beautiful old 1800's era Courthouse



Getting ready for the Grand Canyon rim hike



Interesting Rock formations within the Canyon



Looking down at the mighty Colorado River



Wildlife encountered along the trek - a Mule Deer



The trips highlight - Sunset over the Grand Canyon