

## 2024 Trip Southwest Blog Text

### Day 1, Wednesday, May 8th, Warrensburg to Abilene

I hadn't slept well that night, possibly concerned about beating the severe storms forecast for 0700-0900. Was on the road at 0445, lollygagging along because I don't like driving at night. My route was the usual one: BB to SW 200 to MO-58 to Holden then south on MO-131 to MO-2, thence to Harrisonville to top off on \$2.96 gas. My mileage in the Rav 4 hibrid this far was about 48 mpg.

I continued past Skyline school, concerned about the approaching storm. I was right to be concerned; I hit the front at Louisburg with driving rain and small hail. Finally got past the storm and could see the tid-bits I always look for. First was Prairie Paws Animal Shelter just before Ottawa. I was going to stop for a picture of Friends University there, but Ottawa now has a by-pass. *Actually, Friends U. is in McPherson - Ottawa has an interesting courthouse.*

I took a short break at Casey's in Pomona – there's a silo tree just west of town on K-68. Crossed onto K-268, then, at US-75, continued due west on K-31 north. Some fields were overgrown with young trees, showing what happens when you neither mow nor use fire on these grasslands. Osage City has a railroad and mining museum; it also has a nice looking downtown. Just north of town, K-31 joins US-56 for a while, passing an 1894 frame schoolhouse.

Burlingame claims to be the kettle corn capital of Kansas; it was also a mining town. It has a brick street, the Highway to Hair salon and Chicken Coop Antiques. I'm now in the Flint Hills, known for grazing and small oil wells. And, wouldn't you know it: K-99/K-4 at Eskridge is part of the Native Stone Scenic Byway (<https://www.travelks.com/things-to-do/byways-and-highways/byways/native-stone/>). Aside – many years ago Sandra & I attended a performance of a new play, “Native Stone,” at Arrow Rock.

This area has ranch homes, often made of stone, and grand vistas from the hilltops. It has stone fences left over from the days when farmers were paid a bounty to build them – Sandra would have made me stop so she could add a few stones to her collection.

Crossed under I-70 onto a road being improved. At K-18 to Manhattan, I've moved into bottomlands along the Kaw. The Toyota's map shows a town of Swamp Angel to the north, which could be named for a cannon used against Confederate Fort Sumter.

My reason for stopping at Manhattan was to revisit the Flint Hills Discovery Center museum there (<https://www.flinthillsdiscovery.org>). We'd been there many years ago, but it most certainly has expanded. The exhibits cover the history, flora and fauna of the Hills well, but the arrangement is a bit confusing.

K-177 heading south is a brand new divided highway down past Ft. Riley to I-70. I-70 was, as one might expect, busy – especially since it had stretches of single lanes. I exited and picked up old US-40, a well-maintained road, looking for a cafe. At Chapman, I found Grandma's House, The menu is limited but the breakfast sampler was generous and tasty.

Arrived in Abilene at 1220 and went straight to the Eisenhower Library (<https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/>). I went through the museum that covered his youth, his military career, and his Presidency, then wandered about the grounds.

The well-done county museum (<https://www.dickinsoncountyhistoricalsociety.com/>) is just blocks from “The Ike” and features a neat carousel, something that Sandra would have insisted on riding even if it's not as grand as the one in Burlington, CO.

I was able to check in early to my Holiday Inn Express, which is soon to be replaced by a brand-new one next door. Supper was an excellent chicken fried steak at M&R Grill, Abilene (<https://www.mandrgrillabilene.com/>).

Tomorrow: Old US-40 to Salina, K-140/K-156 to K-4, then US-83 to Monument Rocks, El Quartejejo ruins and Scott City.

For the day and the trip: 257.2 miles, total time 7:32, less 1:25 for 1<sup>st</sup> museum.  
Average mileage thus far: 43.5

## **Day 2, Thursday, May 9th, Abilene to Scott City**

Off early again – actually, early enough to shoot a sunrise from the parking lot. On the road by 0647 after buying gas for \$2.94/gal. On the way out of town, passed Mrs. K's Farmhouse Restaurant, where Sandra & I dined on a previous trip. Abilene is home to the National Greyhound Assn, with Hq and a track on old US-40 and a Hall of Fame in town.

Old 40 runs parallel to a BNSF line. This stretch, like so many today, was pretty flat. The railroads like flat ground and I followed a lot of them. Salina is a railroad town, with a large rail yard and multiple tracks running N-S and E-W. I went to kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade here, and actually remembered where the school had been – I found it when we came thru in 1974, and again today. The empty area back by the fence once held frame buildings.

K-140 runs along tracks in a valley, with small hills to the south. This is the start of the Smoky Hills. Just west of Brookville (estd 1869) mounted people are working cattle. The Prairie Trail Scenic Byway (<http://www.prairietrailbyway.com/>) goes thru this area. Ellsworth is on the Smoky Hill River; beyond it, K-156 is a modern 2-lane with a 65 mph speed limit.

I wonder which tribes ran this area – is it part of Comancheria? Kiowa? Cheyenne? Arapaho? I may find out later. This is part of stone post country, stone largely supplanted by T-posts. Many towns, such as Holyrood, have elevators no longer served by railroads, and have suffered.

Now I'm on K-4 (& will be for the next 180 or so miles). Claflin is home to Squeegee's Bar & Grill. Like many of these towns, the main street is perpendicular to the railroad. Now I'm on the Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway (<https://www.kansaswetlandsandwildlifescenicbyway.com/>) – sure enough, there's Cheyenne Bottoms National Wildlife Refuge. Nearby Hoisington actually has a DQ, Pizza Hut, and the Duck Blind Motel.

A farm along the road has a big windmill generator that's not turning. Olmitz's skyline consists of 2 elevators and a Catholic Church steeple. The farms all have windbreaks on their north sides – wonder why... I take a break at Casey's in La Crosse, the last decent-sized town I'll see until I finally get to Scott City.

I'm now on the Smoky Valley Scenic Byway (<https://www.travelks.com/things-to-do/byways-and-highways/byways/smoky-valley/>) at Brownell. Ranches around here still use old-fashioned windmills to water stock. Ransom has 2 big elevators, sans railroad; it also has the 1<sup>st</sup> State Bank of Ransom – make your own joke. Utica, with only a Post Office and Legion post downtown, is a far cry from the one in upstate NY. I didn't choose to visit Wild Horse Canyon, a “point of interest” per a sign at K-4/K-23 junction. Healy has a real gas station, complete with dinosaur sign.

I pass a number of small feed yards (their term) to US-83, the Western Vistas Historic Byway (<https://westernvistahistoricbyway.com/>). I head north to find Monument Rocks (<https://www.visitoakleyks.com/monument-rocks>), about 10 miles north on 83 and 9 miles east on dusty gravel roads. This area is still in a drought. Monument Rocks are chalk formations left from an ancient sea. Sharks teeth abound, and Mososaur fossils show up now and then. The rocks are inhabited by cliff swallows. I took a bunch of pictures!

Another 9 miles of dusty gravel roads put me back on US-83, soon to turnoff on K-95 to visit the El Quartejejo reconstructed ruins. They were originally built by Puebloan refugees and were abandoned after the Spanish sent troops to drag them back to a form of slavery. They're now part of a state park.

Another 10 miles or so south on 83, Scott City has the El Quartejejo Motel, where I will stay, and the El Quartejejo Museum/Art gallery (<http://www.elquartejejomuseum.org/>). Thorough, well organized and well interpreted, and adequate space to do so. A mediocre Mexican supper at El Dos de Oros because I had no lunch, and go through lots of pictures.

Tomorrow: South to Dalhart, TX, then cross over to New Mexico, visit Mosquero and spend the night in Tucumcari.

Miles for the day: 280.7, for the trip 537.9

Travel time: 7 hours, including photo stops.

Average mileage for the trip thus far 41.1 mpg, not bad considering I was driving uphill with a head wind most of today.

### **Day 3, Friday, May 10th, Scott City to Tucumcari**

I replanned the day to avoid some construction and see some new places (“virgin roads”). I headed west on K-96 (aka US Bike Route 76) for 50 miles to Tribune, in Greeley County (notice any connection there?), with a gas stop at Leoti, “A Great Place on the Great Planes,” price \$3.09. Leoti is in Wichita County, the barn quilt capital of Kansas. Along the way crossed White Woman Creek; the legend says that a white woman who escaped her captors was never found, and still appears now and then along the creek.

My first “virgin road” is K-27 south. With a tail wind I can make good time and save on gas mileage over this flat dryland crop area. I think the grasses here are native shortgrass, since few non-natives could stand the climate here. I pass a Bullet and Bow club with a trap range. At Syracuse (another upstate NY name) the road crosses US-50; a Windbreak Club makes one wonder what kind of wind is broken there. The Arkansas River isn't dry, but it's sure low. Syracuse also has a sand dunes park.

Johnson City, in Stanton County, stands at the junction with US-160. Coming into Richfield in Morton County I saw 2 pure white horses shunning their paint pasture mate. Here comes the Cimarron River; New Mexico has two by that name, known as “wet” and “dry.” This one is very dry. It's also part of

the Cimarron National Grassland, managed by the Forest Service.

K-27 joins US-56 at Elkhart just a short way from the Oklahoma line. This is part of the Cimarron cutoff for the Santa Fe Trail, and the road would daunt the hardest traveler – it's just plain bad! I think Oklahoma treats its Panhandle area like an unwanted stepchild when it comes to roads. The brand name gas in Boise City always has a line, while gas is a dime or more cheaper at a small regional chain station further into town. I switch to US-385 here and head for Texas and better roads.

The Beaver River is dry. Roadside work consists of removing piles of sand from the right-of-way. I am seeing a lot of white trucks with some sort of green mesh-like contraption on top of their tall beds. It seems to contain green vegetative matter. I think it must be alfalfa; nothing else is ready for harvest now. Gas at Dalhart is \$2.99, so I top off. I'm running NW on US-87 to TX-102 west. It's a good road, but I'm not about to test the 75 mph speed limit. The land here is typical llano estacado country, with few natural landmarks.

New Mexico line: speed limits drops by 20 mph, and even that is wishful thinking on this well-ignored byway. Adding to the confusion, road numbers aren't the same as Messers Rand & McNally report. Nevertheless, I find that NM-402 (not 102) is recently paved and in much better shape than the barren, overgrazed pastures that border it. I turn off on NM-102 (the real one), heading west on another neglected road.

Cholla and juniper are plentiful roadside. I'm starting to see some volcanic features in the distance. Small puddles in the potholes makes it appear that a sorely-needed rain shower has recently passed. The tiny town of Bueyeros has a stone church, one occupied dwelling, and some stone ruins. Some volcanic buttes and mesas show up, then a definite escarpment.

NM-39 climbs the scarp to reach Mosquero, a small town at 6000 feet. I stop to visit the local storekeeper, with whom Sandra and I had a long chat about 'little towns that could' a number of years ago. Mosquero has murals, a school and courthouse, and the only public toilet in the county.

I headed back down the scarp, took NM-39 to Logan, US-54 to Tucumcari. It's museum visit time: first the local museum of the Tumcari Historical Society (<https://www.tucumcarimuseum.org/>).

Next, the Mesalands College dinosaur museum (<https://www.mesalands.edu/community/dinosaur-museum/>), The college has a Paleontology Department and Art Department, the latter having just what's needed to make bronze castings of the former's finds.

Cruised Route 66, then checked in to the Holiday Inn Express. Several people I talked with recommended La Cita restaurant, and they were right! Great chile relleno plate!

A bit of replanning for tomorrow to avoid a bridge that's not bridging, and I'll be on my way to Santa Fe via Las Vegas (NM) and Pecos NHP (also site of the Glorieta Pass battle in '62).

Miles for the day: 427.3, for the trip 965.3

Travel time for the day: 8:05

Average gas mileage over three days: 40.7

**Day 4, Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. Tucumcari to Santa Fe**

0500, MDT: Last night, when I wanted to add more 1s & 5s to my wallet, I could not find the spare wallet with my spare cash. Went through everything, just not there. Perhaps I left it on a brown countertop or blanket in Scott City. Called the motel, the night person knew nothing, would ask the manager in the morning. I've been fretting ever since, even had a dream about something similar.

I hit the road about 0630 local time, hoping to catch lighter traffic on I-40. 32 miles later I got off at Newkirk and headed north on NM-129, a little-traveled road through red rocks and buttes. One stock man along the road uses solar power to help his windmill pump water. Three muleys cross the road ahead of me. Fence posts are slender tree branches, perhaps juniper – there's plenty of that to choose from.

49 miles in, I hit NM-104. It's a tad bit better-maintained in this area. I keep passing mesa after mesa, like headlands on a coast. In fact, many of them are – the Canadian Escarpment is a thousand foot high wall from south of Las Vegas all the way to Clayton. Pretty soon I have to climb it – an adventure to be sure, especially after a rain dislodged smaller rocks. My new car is pretty good at evasive maneuvers.

At the top, I'm back on high plains grasslands, where I see my first antelope of the trip. The road drops down to Las Vegas (NM), where I top off the tank for \$3.09/gal. Next stop is about 40 miles down the road: Pecos National Historic Park (<https://www.nps.gov/peco/index.htm>). Two tour buses and assorted other vehicles fill the parking area, each with bundled-up passengers hopeful of a trip to visit the pueblo ruins. I had other plans.

In 1862, a Civil War battle was fought nearby, and the park now controls much of the field. I get directions and a gate code to access the parking area leading to a 2+ mile loop trail. Some of the fighting was up here among the pine, juniper and rocks, while other parts of the action were down below in the valley. I made a good portion of the loop trail and took pictures, a real accomplishment for a flatlander of my years.

I'm looking for a cafe, none to be found. I take the Old Pecos Trail exit, see a street name I recognize, and found myself at Museum Hill (<https://www.museumhill.net/>). I bought a culture pass and toured the International Folk Art Museum, the Native American Art Museum, and the Wheelwright Museum of Native American Art (<https://wheelwright.org/>). Several hours later I check in at the new Holiday Inn Express, unload, and go looking for a recommended New Mexican restaurant, the Pantry (<https://www.pantrysantafe.com/>). Back to the motel to work pictures, get this posted, etc.

Tomorrow: the Santa Fe Plaza, two more museums, and more good food.

For the day: 210.0 miles, for the trip: 1175.4.

Travel time for the day: about 4 hours

Average gas mileage so far: 40.9 mpg

## **Day 5, Sunday May 12<sup>th</sup> – Around Santa Fe**

Today was my day for visiting the Plaza. I pulled into the Cathedral parking lot about 0915, paid my \$15, and found a good spot among all the Mass-going folks. The walk to the Plaza passes by a wall draped with wisteria in bloom.

The Plaza was crowded with tourists dropped off by their tour leader, locals, and artists setting up. My first stop was the Plaza Cafe since I'd had enough if motel breakfasts for a bit. The place is set up like a classic diner, but the prices are classic tourist trap. I had a bowl of posole with a sopapilla and iced tea, for only \$24 with tax & tip.

I spent an hour at the New Mexico Museum of Art (<https://www.nmartmuseum.org/>); its architecture is based on classic Southwestern church design. I traditionally try to take photos from the museum courtyard, but it was crowded with folks on tours either photographing or sketching it. You'll have to settle for this exterior shot.

Inside it does a nice job a displaying selections from its collection. The special exhibit is work by a potter who makes pieces, breaks them, and puts them back together – I once did something similar with model airplanes & firecrackers.

The New Mexico Museum of History (<https://www.nmhistorymuseum.org/>) took me a bit longer. It has the expected New Mexico timeline exhibit, plus special exhibits on Harvey Houses and New Mexico Magazine's centennial, all housed in the new, modern building. The historic Palace of the Governors has fewer examples of hand-carved santos, and more info on the building's history. It originally dates to the days of Juan de Onate's conquest of the area, was demolished during the 1680 Pueblo revolt, and rebuilt during the reconquista. The sections of the Palace are separated by a courtyard.

My next stop was the Plaza-area dime store for a \$1.50 Sunday paper (competition makes all the difference), and the ice cream store for a \$7 break. Then it was on to the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (<https://iaia.edu/iaia-museum-of-contemporary-native-arts/>). This is a mural of the three sisters, on the sculpture garden wall.

Back to the hotel by 2:30, next a trip to someplace that didn't have it for a green chile cheeseburger.

Tomorrow: Albuquerque via the Turquoise Trail.

Today's miles: 12.3, for the trip 1187.7  
No travel time recorded, all city travel.  
Average gas mileage so far: 40.9 mpg

## **Day 6, Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> – Santa Fe to Albuquerque**

Up early, as usual. The hotel breakfast didn't start until 0630, and I had finished the NYT Sunday crossword already, so I hit the road at 0600. One advantage to such an early start is that I got to see the sunlight crawl down the mountain sides.

I'm on NM-14, aka the Turquoise Trail (<https://www.turquoisetrail.org/>). That's because the first town along the road is Cerrillos, site of turquoise mining for well over a century. This whole area is artsy, with lots of “installations” at various homes/studios.

The road does offer scenic pullouts, where I could find possible photo ops showing the Rio Grande valley below.



Another photo op is this privately-owned rock formation, styled as “Garden of the Gods.”

A bit farther down the road is the old coal mining turned tourist trap of Madrid (pronunciation should be no problem for Missourians). The highway/main street winds narrowly between houses and commercial buildings, almost all repurposed to either art or other touristy functions. South of town, the valley east of the road is lined with tailings from the long-abandoned mines.

Hwy 14 ends at Cedar Crest, where I have a choice of I-40 or NM-333, historic US-66. At Tramway, it morphs into Central Avenue, carrying me past motels and restaurants of the past. I follow Central for miles to the University of New Mexico area, home of the Frontier Restaurant (<http://www.frontierrestaurant.com/>), a landmark. I stop for my breakfast of huevos rancheros with beans and green chile stew. Yum!

First stop will be the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science (<https://nmnaturalhistory.org/>). I'm early, but pleasantly surprised that it opens at 0900 rather than 1000. While waiting, I note that the bronze allosaurus is hosting a distant descendant between his jaws.

On to the plaza! It's early, and my favorite bookstore doesn't open until 1100. And, it's Monday – my favorite cafe is closed (advice: don't plan on finding anything open in New Mexico on Monday). I walked around a bit, looked at some t-shirt shops and photographer studios. The latter sure made me feel that my efforts are inadequate. But, Treasure House Books (<https://treasurehousebooks.net/>) opened and I spent \$90 on books – 3 by Steven Havill and the latest Anne Hillerman.

I had green chile stew for lunch at the nearest Garcia's Kitchen. Yes, it's hot! I drove around a bit sightseeing, then checked in to the Pueblo-owned/Pueblo run Holiday Inn Express Old Town. Supper was a green chile hamburger at Laguna Burger (<http://thelagunaburger.com/>), thick, juicy and well-adorned with tasty stuff.

Tomorrow I plan to return to the Plaza area to visit the Albuquerque Museum of Art & History (<https://www.cabq.gov/culturalservices/albuquerque-museum>) and maybe buy some more books. Afternoon will include a visit to the nearby Pueblo Cultural Center.

For the day: 82.9 miles, for the trip 1270.6  
Average gas mileage to date 41.7 mpg!

## **Day 7, Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> – Around Albuquerque**

Up not-quite-as-early this morning, ate the motel breakfast, and planned how to avoid Kansas construction Thursday. Got back to Old Town around 0800, because I checked the computer clock (which I never reset to MDT), an hour before the Albuquerque museum opens. A convocation of dog walkers took place on museum grounds, but was over before I decided to exit my car and look at the sculptures on the grounds.

The art part of the museum represented well-known New Mexico based artists with large, gallery-sized pieces, many of which I recognize from having seen them year after year. The history part condenses a great deal of information into 4 mini-galleries, and there is a special exhibit on “Nuclear New Mexico.” I spent most of an hour and a half there.

My next planned event was lunch at the Church Street Cafe (<https://www.churchstreetcafe.com/>), in an old adobe building. I once took a picture of the “three sisters” by a horno on the patio, now enclosed to provide more seating. I sat on a bench at the Plaza while waiting for the 1100 opening, and chatted a bit with a gentleman polishing his '56 Buick. I had chile relleno, which was good, for lunch.

Next stop was the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (<https://indianpueblo.org/>). It has really changed/professionalized since my last visit at least 6 years ago. It more clearly tells you which pueblo speaks which of the 5 languages from 3 different families,, and covers how they got to where they are today. Did you know the pueblos have their own baseball leagues? The special exhibit tells all about them. I talked for a while with a Marine veteran artist/potter from Acoma, and took a picture of billowing clouds rising above the dance ground.

Gas was \$2.99/gallon at the Pueblo-owned station, so I topped off and headed back to the hotel to finish replanning Thursday.. Supper was green chile stew back at Laguna Burger. Tomorrow I start back, Old 66 to Moriarty,M-41 to Willard, and US-60 to Clovis, with a stop at Bosque Redondo.

For the day: 3.9 miles, for the trip 1274.6  
Average gas mileage to date: 40.7

### **Day 8, Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> – Albuquerque to Clovis**

I pulled out at 0605 MDT, well before breakfast, and picked up I-40 east to the Juan Tabo exit. That put me on NM-333/Old 66 east to Moriarty. As I entered the pass, the sun, no longer hidden by the Sandias, was blinding. I was in no rush, so took my time. Did you know that Corvair Clubs existed? One adopted a stretch of Old 66. A bit farther along, the highway must pass through a horsey area, evidenced by Dressage Road.

I note a haze or fog low in the valley north of the road. Moriarty, elevation 6200, is a decent-sized town with a huge solar farm. I turn south on NM-41, so the sun is no longer in my eyes. This country is flat, with mountains to the west. At Estancia, I join the Salt Missions Scenic Byway (<https://www.newmexico.org/places-to-visit/scenic-byways/salt-missions/>) – I think I've been on another part of it on my visits to the Salinas Missions Nat'l Monument. There are signs to watch for water on road, needed because this ditchless road is actually a bit lower than much of the surrounding land.

After 30 miles, I switch onto a 'virgin' stretch of US-60. To the south are mesas and to the north mountains. The road passes some large playas, so I stop to take a picture or two.

To the right I see the first of many long BNSF freights heading west. Encino hosts the junction of US-60 and US-285 – it has no services. Vaughn has a triple highway and double railroad crossing. It has motels of varied ages, a couple of gas stations, an old Santa Fe RR station, and no surviving cafes..

Heading west and ignoring the 55 MPH speed limit, I top a hill and see a dead-straight hiway, with a clump of distant trees; 11 miles later, I pass that clump of trees. Yeso, NM, is a ghost town along the road. It's ruined buildings appear to be photogenic so I stop to take a shot.



Ft. Sumner, my main stop of the day! First building I see is Esther's Diner; it serves me an excellent breakfast burrito (green). The real reason to stop is NOT Billy the Kid's grave; I drive right past it to the Bosque Redondo Memorial (<https://nmhistoricsites.org/bosque-redondo>) at Fort Sumner State Historic Site. What happened here? Just the forced relocation of about 500 Mescalero Apaches and 10,000 Navajo, rounded up and marched to an inhospitable piece of ground. Starvation, forced labor to build adobe soldier barracks, etc., took their toll. Finally, the Apaches escaped and headed for their mountain hideouts. The Navajo were finally granted their own reservation in their homeland, seen as worthless by the whites. It's a very powerful display; the museum thoughtfully provides discrete boxes of Kleenex for those in need.

I'm back on US-60, passing abandoned towns and delayed by construction. I think about stopping at Cannon AFB for a commissary visit, decide not to. Another option is to revisit the Blackwater Draw archaeological site (think Clovis points), but the memory of the biting bugs dissuades me. I pull into Clovis at 12:45 hoping to find a local museum to visit to kill some time. There's a Public Library! They'll know something! And they do: there's no county museum and all the Buddy Holly/Norman Petty sites are closed. One of the librarians is wearing a Federal sack coat – yup, they're BOTH reenactors! We had a nice chat about events past & future.

Got to my Holiday Inn Express about 1400 and checked right in. Supper was my last taste of “green,” at LeAL in Clovis.

Tomorrow is a long one, about 420 miles, lose an hour on time zone, and a visit to the Panhandle Plains Museum.

For the day: 250.5 miles, for the trip 1525.1.

Time driving today: about 5 hours.

Average gas mileage to date: 42.5 mpg

### **Day 9, Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> – Clovis to Pratt**

On the road at 0635 CDT (0535 Clovis time). As I pulled from the parking lot, I noticed that the local TSC sell big bales, only \$169! I pick up US-60 at Bovina, parallel to a BNSF main line, where the first of maybe 40-50 trains I'll see is passing. Every town along the railroad, and many that aren't, has its grain elevator – castles of the plains, standing on the horizon like their medieval counterpart.

Hereford, TX, proclaims itself the “Beef Capital of the World.” A bit farther up the road is Canyon, home of the Panhandle Plains History Museum (<https://www.panhandleplains.org/>) – except it has much more than history: art, geology, paleontology, and OIL! Everything is well displayed and well-interpreted. When oil and cattle money want something done, they want it done right. Here's some sample photos:

I find that loop 335 bypasses Amarillo – Yay! Back on US-60, I find they raise more than oil, cattle & wheat – a Carson County Gin speaks of cotton, as well. South of Pampa, Keystone Tower Systems produces the vertical part of those big wind turbines.

After a longer-than-wanted lunch break in Pampa, I head north on TX-177 through rolling green plains. The Canadian River is near, a wide and deep valley rather than a canyon. Erosion on the valley sides has produced buttes and mesas. I start seeing water in fields & ditches about 20 miles south of Perryton; this will continue until almost to Kansas, Perryton has a bypass, too, and I took it. A truck

filled with those big water jugs pulled out to beat me to the intersection and turned a bit too sharply. Yup, he lost a whole pallet of them, Haste certainly made waste for him!

I'm now heading east on TX-15. Pass through Darrouzett, a prosperous-looking town despite the abandoned railroad. It borders Ivanhoe Creek. A bit down the line, I see evidence that the road was inundated in a flash flood. TX-15 becomes OK-15; I leave it to turn north on US-283. This road is lightly traveled. The terrain a bit to the north is small hillocks that remind me of well-vegetated sand dunes.

I pick up US-64 eastbound for about 30 miles. Buffalo Creek cuts through red rock as it passes the town of Buffalo, home of Shorty's Cafe. I turn north onto OK-34, which crosses the not-so-dry Cimarron – first time I've ever seen it flowing outside of New Mexico. OK-34 turns into KS-1 and passes through Buttermilk, a small settlement.

At Coldwater, I pick up US-160 east. This passes through the Gypsum Hills Scenic Byway (<https://www.travelks.com/things-to-do/byways-and-highways/byways/gypsum-hills/>), terrain much more interesting than the Flint Hills or Smoky Hills – I have to go back when I have time to stop and take pictures. Finally, at Medicine Lodge, I pick up US-281 north to Pratt and my hotel, arriving about 5 PM, after over 10 hours on the road, 7 actually driving.

Tomorrow: Home via Hutchinson, Newton, Emporia, Ottawa, and Harrisonville.

For the day: 437.7 miles, for the trip 1962.9

Average gas mileage for the trip: down to 41.1 mpg (high speeds & headwinds aren't good for economy)

### **Day 10, Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> – Pratt to Warrensburg**

I had difficulty sleeping, so I got up really, really early and pulled out at 0410. K-61 was almost empty at that hour; I met few trucks and fewer cars, plus a few freights on the neighboring track. I picked up US-50 at Hutchinson, just as a faint glow started to lighten the northeast horizon. By Newton, Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn" began to appear. Fog also started to appear.

By the time full daylight arrived, I remarked to myself, "I've never seen Kansas so green." Rain does cause things to grow this time of year. The Marais des Cygnes River was definitely out of its banks! At Ottawa, I turned toward home on K-68, passing a silo tree about 5 miles east of town. A stop for gas at Harrisonville (cheapest prices in the area), a stop for road construction on MO-2 just west of MO-131, and I was home at 1000. Then came the fun part - finding the house behind the high unmown grass. Guess I need to get on that.

For the day: 312.4 miles, for the trip 2275.3

Average gas mileage for the trip, per the tracker in my new Toyota Rav4 hybrid, 41.1. I'll do some calculating later to verify and post it when I do my wrap-up.

### **Wrap-up, May 19<sup>th</sup> – Warrensburg**

The stats:

Approximate miles by state (differs by 4 miles due to rounding error):

Missouri – 131  
Oklahoma – 142  
Texas – 318  
New Mexico – 725  
Kansas – 963

Approximate miles of “virgin roads,” those I'd never before driven: 869. or about 38%. Kansas was the real leader here. With all the trips I've made in that direction, it's surprising that I could find so many.

Calculated gas mileage between the Harrisonville stop on the way out and the stop there on the way back (this includes all gas & miles for 2177 miles): 40.02. Average gas price was \$3.04

Best meals of the trip:

- Grandma's House, Chapman KS (Day 1)
- M&R Grill, Abilene (Day 1)
- La Cita, Tucumcari (Day 3)
- Pantry, Santa Fe (Day 4)
- Frontier Restaurant, Albuquerque (Day 5)

I probably wouldn't go back to:

- Any Chili's
- Plaza Cafe, Santa Fe (food was fine, prices not)

**Museums:** I visited a total of 18 museums or visitor centers with exhibits (links in each day's travel report). I can't say anything bad about any of them. I think the most impressive was the Panhandle Plains Historic Museum in Canyon, TX, for its comprehensive and well presented collection. If you're a serious museum-goer and traveling to New Mexico, the New Mexico Culture Pass (<https://www.newmexicoculture.org/visit/culturepass>) is a great bargain. It admits you to seven museums and all the state historic sites, one visit each, over a 12 month period.

My new Rav 4 hybrid performed well on the trip. While certain aspects are less convenient than the Forester, it turned out to be more comfortable on long stretches of driving. The turning radius, and head and legroom are comparable. I think it has a bit more space in the storage area. It is noisier both from wind noise and when the engine kicks in, and it doesn't have a rear window washer. The difference in gas mileage saved \$50-\$75.

Overall, it was an enjoyable trip. It cost a tad over \$2000, if I include the IHG points I bought to get more 'free' room nights. Lodging was most expensive item, followed by cat boarding, food and fuel. I'm already planning next summer's trip.