

Gym Rat Rantings by Bob Ring



On a Recent Road Trip to Sedona

How long has it been since you've driven to Sedona - Arizona's beautiful red rock country? Pat and I, along with Pat's son David, stayed in a time-share there for a weekend in May.

We were lucky to get back home in one piece, having spent hours in Sedona's traffic roundabouts. It seemed like the stop signs and traffic lights at every intersection had been replaced by a roundabout. (It had been two years since our last visit; I remember construction was just starting on this traffic control [*improvement?*]). I also remember thinking at the time that this was the craziest idea I ever heard of.)

I've changed my mind. The roundabouts were well done and efficiently controlled traffic. The only problem was learning how to use them, i.e. recognizing when you had the right away and following the "yield" signs. But it was the other guys that gave us the most trouble, visitors who hadn't yet mastered the proper etiquette to get through the roundabout safely.

From our Sedona base, we drove Pat's Toyota Venza up notorious Schnebly Hill Road, a winding dirt and rocky path to the best panoramic viewpoint of the Sedona Valley. I've been up and down that bouncy road many times in the past; on this trip the road was in the best condition I've seen.

We also drove along Red Rock Loop, just southwest of Sedona, to stop at our favorite viewing point for Cathedral Rock, a group of majestic red rocks that have become the "signature" picture for Sedona's fantastic scenery. Our special viewpoint is an unmarked, unpaved area just off the road, but the important thing is, we found a tree through which we could frame our photos of the stupendous Castle Rock formation. Every time I go to Sedona - more than half a dozen times in the last 15 years - I take the same photo. The first one hangs in my office at home.

We had breakfast one morning at the famous Coffee Pot restaurant and took the recommendation of our (obviously knowledgeable) young server for a little-known hike approaching Castle Rock, along Oak Creek, from the west. Trailhead access was from the Village of Oak Creek. The trail was a beautiful 2-3 mile easy walk through lush creek-side forest - and not many other people.

By the way, if you're 62 years old or older, you can get a Golden Age Passport from the National Park Service - a free entry pass to all U.S. National Parks. Happily, we found that the Passport also gave us a lifetime free Red Rock Pass to park on national forest land around Sedona.

The culinary highlight of our trip was a birthday dinner for Pat in the Village of Oak Creek at Cucina Rustica, a Mediterranean restaurant that was highlighted as one of Arizona's best restaurants in a recent issue of *Arizona Highways*.