

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



On to Las Vegas

From Sedona (that I talked about last month) Pat and I continued our driving vacation to Las Vegas. We took an alternate route through Laughlin because of the ongoing highway construction around Hoover Dam. By years end, a new bridge over the Colorado River will handle traffic so you won't have to inch your way across the dam itself.

We got to Las Vegas in good shape and easily found our time-share a few blocks off the Strip. A pretty nice location – a great view of the brightly lit hotels at night and shuttle service to several sites on the Strip.

On our first night, at Pat's request for her birthday, we saw a wonderful Cirque du Soleil show with a Beatles music theme. The show was presented in the specially-constructed \$100M Love Theater in the Mirage Hotel, with 2013 seats around a central stage. The production, staging, tumbling and gymnastics, and music were unbelievable – very entertaining. Are Pat and I the last people in Tucson to see a Cirque du Soleil show?

The next day we drove over to Hoover Dam and took a tour of that engineering marvel. From an observation window, deep in the face of the dam, we could see the nearly-completed bypass bridge less than a mile away.

For the first time in several visits to Las Vegas, we took the time to explore two close-by scenic sites, Valley of Fire State Park and Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Both contained majestic, colorful rock formations that we found very impressive and well worth our time. On the other hand, Lake Mead looked rather sickly, with low water levels and (to our mind) barren surroundings.

Our Frommers travel guide led us to the “best Thai restaurant in North America,” Lotus of Siam, in a shopping center, well off the Strip. That was my first Thai meal – very, good. Because of a communication error in ordering, we were served three entrees, which we eagerly devoured.

Except for the first night, we stayed off the Strip. Large clamoring crowds, sidewalks blocked by mountainous street overpasses, and aggressive hawkers of “girlie” services, detracted from viewing the fabulous hotels and other attractions. And would you believe that we didn't gamble a dime!