



# TUCSON TO POULSBO: SPRING 2020

We stayed in Tucson longer this year as we waited for Covid-19 pandemic issues to become more clear to us. We had hoped to spend our normal month or two having adventures on the way back to Poulsbo but, as with most everyone, our plans changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Covid-19 modified plans were to return home when 1) it was safer to be in Poulsbo than in Tucson with respect to new Covid-19 cases each day and/or 2) it just got too darn hot temperature wise in Tucson for us.

Our age, Wendy's auto-immune disease, and her propensity for turning colds in bronchitis have instilled a heightened level of cautiousness in us under normal circumstances, let alone considering this new Covid-19 pandemic.

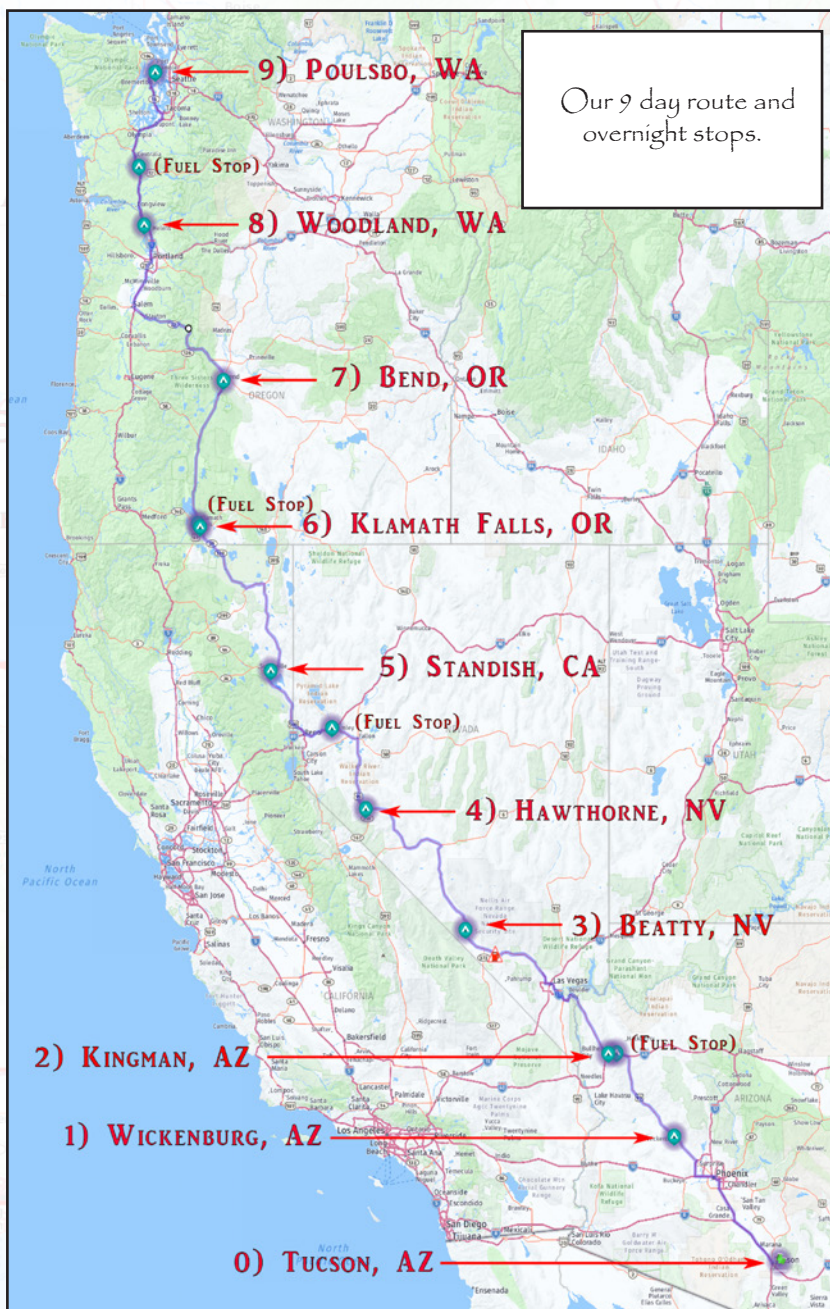
Everyday I tracked the new Covid-19 case count in both Pima County where Tucson is located and Kitsap County where Poulsbo is located. At the time it seemed like the most appropriate number for us to track and use as the primary motivation to make the move from Tucson to Poulsbo. I was looking for a trend that held up over several days in both counties, hoping that would be the most appropriate indication that it was time to switch locations.

Being a seasoned skeptic (or a well informed optimist of you like) I assumed the data was less than accurate. Still, these data points were at least 'something' to base our travel decision on and thus reduce our risks of catching it. I had no idea just how inaccurate the published numbers were until we returned home and found out that Arizona was being sued by the media for not releasing the number of nursing home cases or deaths.

Beginning in April the published new cases in Kitsap County came down to one or two a day and in Pima County it was still climbing. Considering what I know now, it seems reasonable to assume that the published numbers of new cases in Pima County (that where not including nursing homes) were actually much higher.

As well, the daytime temperatures in Tucson were now exceeding our comfort zone, so we decided to head back home in a direct path using the less traveled routes in order to avoid people as much as we could.

To the right is our 9 day route we took from Tucson to Poulsbo.





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Our MoHo uses diesel fuel and we most often re-fuel at track stops using the truck lanes. Normally we pay with a traditional credit card that has an attached 4% rebate to it.

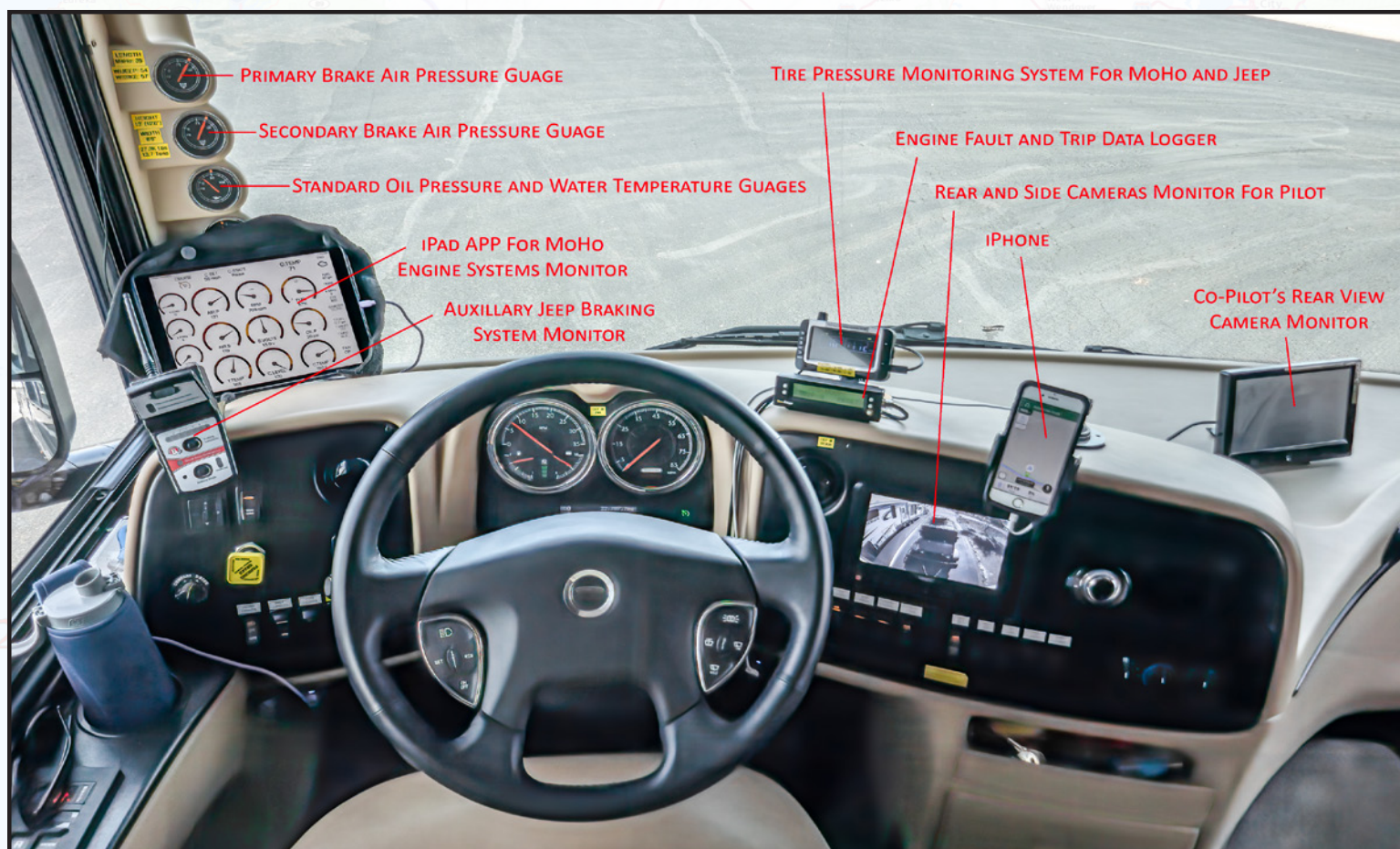
At truck stops and using the truck lanes required us to go in and prepay with the credit card. The pumps in the truck lanes do have machines but they are not set up for traditional credit cards but card systems that truckers use. Having to go in at each fueling stop to prepay seemed a Covid-19 risk to us so while in Tucson we joined a fleet fuel program which meant 1) we could use a card at the pump to avoid going inside and increasing our health risks and 2) we would get a discount, albeit no 4% rebate.

This system proved great for us on the way back, avoiding contact risks as well as getting 40-50% off the posted fuel price in most cases. The card did not cost us anything other than to hook up a checking account to it for automatic withdrawal. If you want to know more about this program here is the link: <https://www.tsdlogistics.com/services/fuel-program/>

As you probably already know we do not travel many miles in a day and usually we don't travel multiple days in a row. On this trip we did travel everyday as there was limited opportunities to explore much without taking unnecessary health risks. However, we did not travel any more miles per day than we normally do.

Our hours behind the wheel moving down the road a couple hundred or so miles are not our only effort each day. Pre and post flight duties and checklists add between 2-3 hours of effort each day. Driving a rig that is nearly 60' long, weighs 15 tons, has all sorts of limitations as to what you can do with it on the road, something I normally drive only 2-4 months a year, is not something I take lightly. Things I remind myself of all the time. That isn't even considering the very precious cargo in the co-pilot's seat!

While there seems to be a lot to look at on the dash, almost everything is a monitor that is of secondary interest to the views out the front, sides and back related to my direction of travel and what is moving past and by us. The co-pilot does remind me of that from time to time.





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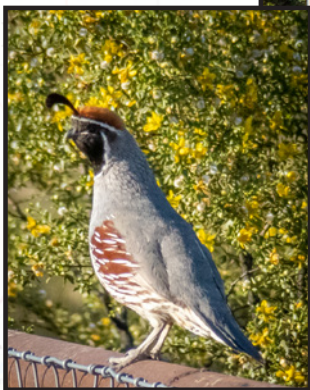
Our first overnight stop was at an RV park just north of Wickenburg, Arizona. A small park with only a few spaces which was perfect in avoiding parks with a lot of people. When I did research on finding a park in or near Wickenburg, I found most were set up for horse enthusiasts and this one was too. While it was just off the Arizona Highway 95, it was still small enough and hidden enough that they came out to the highway at the turnoff to their place in order to guide us in. That was a good thing too, as on the drive in from the highway both Wendy and I had second thoughts about being able to fit in let alone be able to pass any oncoming vehicles. As I said, the place was primarily for horse enthusiasts that stay for the winter and most had left already and we were the only transient overnight visitor. We got a front row seat to a little cow wrangling just as we got there. While I was doing post-flight chores Wendy did a little iPhone video out the front window of the MoHo of a run or two. Click on the photo of the horse to the right to see it.

After I was done with the post-flight activities it was easy enough to take a short walk around the place. I was hoping to catch some wrangling photos from a distance with my new PnS camera (Point and Shoot) and try out the cameras long 600mm lens but they were done and the place was pretty much deserted except for a Gambel's Quail. Later, after appropriate refreshments and dinner we took an even longer walk along the local back roads and saw no one. We felt pretty good about our first choice of RV parks on this trip, especially considering why we chose it.

Our second stop in Kingman, Arizona was okay, but it was too crowded to explore any at all.

The next day it was onto Beatty, NV and to an RV park we have stayed at a couple of times. It is small but very functional. In normal times there are stores and restaurants within easy walking distance as well as easy access to Death Valley and/or to continue north or south on Nevada Highway 95.

Upon entry into the RV park the office can put one off a bit but the lady is very nice and the park is just fine. Wendy was fully clothed in PPE, declined invitation into the office and conducted business outside at arms length.





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The RV park, and for that matter the entire town of Beatty, was quiet enough that we could take a walk around. Behind the RV park was an unusually large number of horse shoe pits. I am pretty sure there were enough for each citizen of Beatty to have their own.

The NSHPA (Nevada State Horseshoe Pitchers Association) Beatty Boo tournament will be held here next October 24th. Something to check out if you are in the area.



Mel's Diner was closed, no take out. We have eaten there before, a place that only took cash from what I remember. The place was decked out in Mel's Diner era memorabilia too. I think we included this place in a prior *Flying Pig Adventures* travelogue as well.



The Desert Inn is in the same condition as we've seen it for years. No improvements have been made so we no longer recommend it to anyone! Okay, okay... we *never* did recommend it.





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The next day we headed north on Arizona 95. The town of Goldfield is along the way and I have wanted to stay there a couple days and explore for some time, but it did not work out on this trip. When we got to Goldfield it seemed quiet enough so we stopped and took a walk around the town. The last couple times we have driven through Goldfield it seemed to have become a very eclectic hangout for antiques and odd stuff, including people. There is an RV park of sorts there that seemed okay for a night or two as well.

Goldfield was a boomtown in the first decade of the 20th century due to the discovery of gold. Between 1903 and 1940 Goldfield's mines produced more than \$86 million at then-current prices.

Parts of the cult classic 1971 car chase movie, *Vanishing Point*, were filmed in Goldfield, and it was the site of the fictitious radio station "KOW", and the DJ "Super-Soul". Goldfield also served as the fictional town of "Glory Hole" in the 1987 film *Cherry 2000*.





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Some places looked like they may still be in business but outside of one store (which we did not go into) nothing was open.



We checked out a few fixer uppers but none fit our needs.





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The Goldfield Art Car Park Gallery is a work in progress...



Stuff from my past. The next page will reveal the entire machine.





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When I first went to work for Wendy's family as Data Processing Manager they were still using one of these to communicate daily from the factory in Indiana to the factory in Taiwan. Going to a fax machine was a huge change as they could then send drawings back and forth.



I wondered what the story was with this door. There is a Baxter, California and considering what else is strewn about Goldfield, finding that this door made it's way here seemed perfectly normal and shouldn't have been a big surprise. Yet it did peak my curiosity. As it turns out, parts of Goldfield served as the fictional town of Baxter, California in the 1998 film Desert Blue.



I was not sure how many machines, devices, engines and such are here, it could even be that all this is just one machine.

If one wanted, there was even a place to take a nap in the warm sun.



I felt a bit of a connection to this machine as well. I used to operate these in a print shop... a day or so ago.





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After the mini adventure in Goldfield we headed on north. At the junction of Nevada Highway 95 and Nevada Highway 6 there was what appeared to be an old abandoned gas station and associated buildings. It is actually the bona fide ghost town of Coaldale. A perfect place for us to stop for lunch!

Coal near Coaldale was discovered in 1894. In 1911, the Darms Mine and the Nevada Coal and Fuel Co. mines were in operation. In the early 1900s, there was renewed interest in the coal, when Dr. Frances Williams of Goldfield, Nevada personally restaked claims. Coaldale had a store, cafe, motel and service station as late as 1993, but they are now abandoned, though still standing. Residences and other buildings have disappeared. The service station was closed down due to EPA testing in 1993 that found that its underground fuel tanks were leaking. Soon, the restaurant and motel closed, since the service station was the primary attraction for travelers. At some point before 2006, a fire destroyed the restaurant.

We had the whole town to ourselves so after lunch I explored some of the old buildings.



To the west we could see the snow covered White Mountains where we like to explore the bristlecone pine forests. Then continuing west is the Owens Valley, the Sierra Nevada Mountains and finally the Pacific Ocean.

Getting up to the bristlecone pine forests of the White Mountains by vehicle is not possible until late summer and fall due to the snow. Those mountain tops are over 14,000 feet high and the bristlecone pines are at 9,200 to 11,500. A bristlecone pine, named Methuselah, located within the mountain range is the oldest known, verified living tree in the world, at over 4,850 years old.





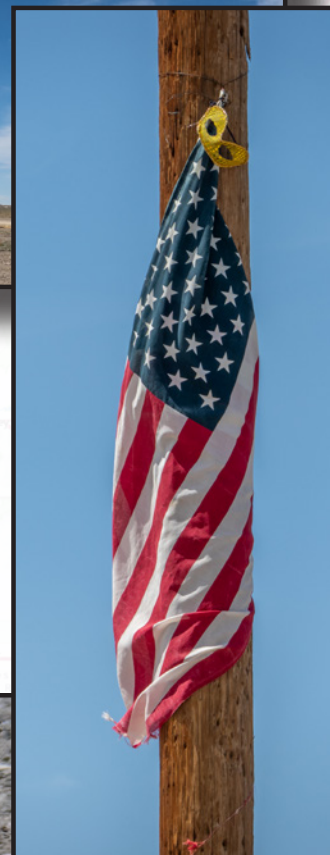
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I saw an American flag attached halfway up a telephone pole. Not a place one would normally see a flag at half-mast or even a flag for that matter, even if a flag at half-mast was appropriate at the time. Maybe some of the taggers had the idea of placing it at the top of the pole but ran out of energy halfway up. Anyway, it didn't really seem disrespectful, more avant-garde and odd, so maybe it does fit in with the local decor and atmosphere.



When I came back to the MoHo there was an American Avocet hanging around checking things out.

After lunch and the short walk about of Coaldale, we continued on. The route we took was not over those picturesque snow covered White Mountains and into Owens Valley, but north on Highway 95 to Hawthorne, Nevada, route in the photo below.





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From Coaldale we made Hawthorne, Nevada where the Hawthorne Army Depot is (a U.S. Army ammunition storage depot). It is said to be the “World’s Largest Ammunition Depot” and is divided into three ammunition storage and production areas, plus an industrial area housing command headquarters, facilities engineering shops in the afternoon. The park was pretty full so we stayed inside except for a short uneventful walk around the park that evening. Driving into, through and out of Hawthorne and seeing all the ammunition storage bunkers surrounding the small town was a bit unnerving. We hoped for no loud noises!

Initially we had planned to dry camp along side the highway on BLM land just north of Hawthorne at Walker Lake. The temperatures were getting pretty hot, so in our planning we opted to just stay at an RV park where we could hook up to electricity and easily run our AC units all night if necessary (and not run our generator for electricity all night).

I am glad we did not stay at the Walker Lake BLM campground as there are ‘billions’ of spiders all over that area as reported by the video blogger Wonderhussy. I enjoy watching her videos of the places she visits in the desert areas of Death Valley and when we got home after the trip I watched one she did on that spot just about the time we were there. BILLIONS OF SPIDERS! YIKES!

The next stops were all uneventful and offered no interesting adventures for us. Under normal conditions I am sure there would have been plenty to do and see.

Our last stop before Poulsbo was in Woodland, Washington. That was also our first stop headed south last fall. I’ve commented about this place in other travelogues as we stay here often on our travels north and south. Again, we saw ships and birds..

The next day we arrived in Poulsbo and spent the next few days in a local RV park unloading the MoHo into the house, cleaning the MoHo and then putting it in storage until... when? We are not sure at this point.

Like everyone else we are adjusting to the ‘new normal’ and figuring out just what kind of traveling adventures are and will be possible in the short and long term. Nonetheless, we can’t imagine there won’t be some sort of *Flying Pig Adventures* in the future. Until then...

Ciao,

Wally & Wendy Hampton



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