



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2023.06.15
St. Louis, MO: Gateway Arch National Park

Tonight was all about getting the dusk and darkness pics. I knew I'd be passing through St. Louis late in the day – and would be looking for a good supper break – on my way to my date with an Antelope in a few days. Hence, it would be more of a stop-and-snap visit than a National Park tour.

I have toured GANP before, but it had been a while. Like decades.

There is a very nice museum underground, and I'm sure it's been upgraded to even better since I last went subterranean about twenty years ago in the "SW '03" roadtrip. It has dozens and dozens of exhibits pertaining to the Westward Expansion of the United States and the intrepid souls that made it happen. You could easily spend a full day taking it all in.

St. Louis was, of course, considered the Gateway to the West, so it was the perfect site for this monument. The Mississippi River symbolized the border between civilized east and wild west, and St. Louis was about as happenin' as you could get.



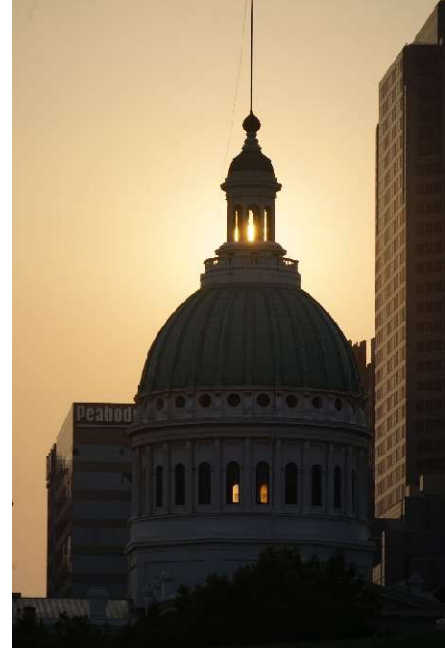
That underground level is also where you'll find the elevator trams you can take you to observation deck on the underside of the structure's apex. The pods hold 4-6 people, as I recall, and they sort of trundle up a track on one leg and trundle down on the other.

You would gawk out the tiny windows, then pick up a descending tram car when you were ready. It may be different than that now.

My most recent ride up was near the end of last century when I was coaching the men's track team at University of Rochester. We brought our full team to the UAA Meet at SLU. Some of us took the tram ride, and the others concocted a scheme to surprise me.

When we were up top, one of our group apparently made a phone call to let them know we had arrived, and the ground group of about 24 guys laid down on the grassy hill underneath so that their bodies spelled out the letters U R. That was so damn cool.

But tonight, daylight and time were in short supply. I had not taken pix of the Arch at night before, and I wanted to do so, so it was a focused incursion. I remembered an Italian restaurant called Charlie Gitto's just a few blocks away, up near the Old Courthouse, that I liked a lot, but I never considered going out to dinner. The Internet says it's still there, going strong. I recommend it highly.



So, anyway, GooGirl took me right down to the Park itself and I got a free parking space right across the street. Given that it was the sunset hour, I suspect somebody had recently pulled out after spending a lovely late Spring afternoon enjoying GANP.

I did my usual stroll-around, snapping pics with both the Sony a7 DSLR and the iPhone 13 Pro. Remember when cell phone cameras were cool for quick clicks of friends but mostly a joke when it came to taking real photos? Those days are g-o-n-e gone, Shawn.

My a7 takes great action shots when I photograph track meets, and it takes really good low light shots as well. But my iPhone is almost as good, and, to be honest, in some cases even better. If I'm somewhere where I want to have photos that can be blown up as large format prints, then I'm using the Sony. But, in almost all other applications – especially Social Media, emailing and texting, where the largest a photo will probably have to be is a laptop screen (and most never make it that far), the phone is a no-brainer. And you can't beat the phone for one-handed shots while driving!

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes. GANP. The strategy in place here this day was to get some last-rays-of-sun shots, then adjourn to Blue Maxx for some supper, then come back out when dusk surrendered to dark and get some pix of the Arch all lit up.

Dusk is just a bad time to get decent photos. There is not enough light, not enough shadows, and not enough contrast. I decided long ago that I'm better off giving the cam a rest – maybe DL'ing the days pics from the memory card into the laptop – and letting the electric lighting take full charge of things.

So, I cooked up a Hormel Compleats dinner: Spaghetti and Meat Sauce. Sixty seconds in the MWO and dinner was served. I'm not a fan of most such ultra-fast, processed meals – including many of the offerings in the Compleats line – but the S&MS impressed me! I expected watery sauce, very little meat, and stringy yellowish pasta. But, instead, I got a thick hot blend of meaty sauce and a bowl packed full of sauce-saturated noodles. I hit the damn spot so well that I was moved to write extensively about it. As you have just seen.



The reflecting pool on the north side of the Arch, and the wide rolling lawn and trees that surround it, are things that I do not remember from past visits. They may well have been there, but I'm thinking they were being constructed. I seem to remember a lot of fencing and orange cones and I saw none of that this time. It's a beautiful riverside park.

My original walkabout had taken me to what I considered the best angles for pix, so naturally, my nighttime stroll covered the same ground. Many of the nighttime photos look more vibrant. I was not able to recreate an after-dark version of that full ring (see page 1), but it was close.

With my photographic itch scratched, it was time to plan my escape from this city. I knew was not going far, but I also knew that I wanted to go far enough to be out of any rush-hour crush in the morning. GooGirl took me to the west side of the city, to one of my

favorite hotel chain choices, where I shut my blackout curtains and settled in for a nice night of parking lot sleep.

Missouri would be a blur tomorrow, very likely without a single stop. It was designated as a Driving Day, with no attractions or distractions. Miles were the motive, and BM and I would roll right through KC and well into Kansas.

Check out the full photo gallery on Smugmug:
<https://rickmackenzie.smugmug.com/20230615-St-Louis/>