



Today we had a break from the madness of Las Vegas and headed out of town. A few months ago I came up with the idea that if I showed the kids a video about Hoover Dam, then we could make a really quick stop there on the way to Grand Canyon without having to do the visitor centre. Seemed good in theory, but it backfired. Our budding engineer was so intrigued by the dam that a tour went on to his must-do list. The dam is only 45 minutes from Vegas so we decided to make a separate trip out there.























We had hoped to do one of the full dam tours, but they aren't operating at the moment. We were still able to visit the diversion tunnels at the bottom of the dam and also the power plant. Being inside the dam was interesting, but the best bit was the outside of the dam. We walked to the other side of the dam, arriving about an hour and 5 minutes later (5 minutes of walking and a one hour time change to Arizona!). Last time we visited, the main highway went over the dam, but in 2010 a new bypass bridge opened. The Mike O'Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial bridge is another impressive structure and gives fabulous views of the dam.















So far we have enjoyed fabulous weather. The first night in Las Vegas was a bit cool but the days are warm and sunny. The locals tell us the weather has been awful the last few weeks and they're glad to see "normal" winter weather return. In the afternoon it gets to around 18 degrees but it feels much warmer in the sun. The days are short though with sunset not long after 4pm. It will be later when we cross into Arizona tomorrow and change to a new time zone. Although it's warm at the moment, we are heading to much colder climates. The boys needed some warmer clothes so we stopped off at Dicks Sporting Goods in Henderson on the way back from the dam to stock up.

We had a much needed rest for a couple of hours in the afternoon then headed to Downtown Vegas for dinner. You can't visit Vegas without having at least one buffet. Trip advisor reviews recommended the Garden Court Buffet at Main Street Station Hotel. It was a great choice with a fantastic selection of food in a lovely setting. Didn't break the bank at \$50 for the whole family.

We finished our meal just in time to race down to Freemont Street and catch the 7pm sound and light show. The Freemont Street area of hotels and casinos is much older than most of the strip, it reminded me of an old movie set. Lots of flashing lights, loud music and action

made it a fun place for a wander. We called in to the Golden Nugget Hotel to check out the largest gold nugget on display in the world. Next to it was a gold vending machine (it took cash only) - the price was updated every 60 seconds!



Walking back to the car was definitely an eye opener for the kids. There were some pretty weird people around and they had to learn to stay close and keep walking, rather than stare at police making arrests and other sights they are not used to. Las Vegas is a lot of fun but it also has a very depressing side to it. It's amazing how many people just sit at their pokie machines all alone, spending money they probably don't have. We've had a great time but are looking forward to heading off to the Grand Canyon tomorrow.