



It's been a bit of a struggle to rise early because of the time change, but we managed to get out of Las Vegas just after 9am. The first part of the road was familiar after our Hoover Dam excursion, but once we crossed the memorial bridge it was new territory.

Once we left the casinos of Nevada behind, it couldn't have been more different than Las Vegas. A real desert landscape with various shades of grey and the odd sort-of green plant. To start with we thought the drive was going to be boring, but after a while we started to appreciate the variety in the desert. The plants and landscape changed as we drove the miles. It was quite weird driving through the desert listening to Christmas music, hard to believe that it's only 8 days until Christmas when we feel far away from all the mad rushing that normally precedes Christmas. Very nice though!

We made a quick detour to Chloride, an old mining town that had around 2000 people at its peak. Today there are about 250 people living there and it's a bizarre little town in the desert. The next stop was Seligman, a classic little town on the historic Route 66. This is the town that Radiator Springs (from the Cars movies) is based on. The place was dead quiet and a lot of shops and restaurants were closed, but there was still some great Route 66 memorabilia to look at. We had fun poking in the shop that featured in Billy Connolly's Route 66 series. It was gorgeous sunny weather so we decided to picnic in the town. That was clearly not a "normal" thing to do in Seligman, but it was lovely to eat picnic food rather than fast food. We could have spent lots more time exploring around the area, but wanted to get to Grand Canyon for sunset.





We're now in the "Wild West"

































The kids were really excited when they started to see snow along the sides of the road, even though it was still about 15 degrees outside. They got even more excited as we approached Grand Canyon. Matt was getting a bit concerned that we were on the wrong road as you can't see the canyon until you are right there. We headed straight to Mather Point as the sun was already low in the sky and starting to redden the canyon. Even though Andy and I have been here before, we were still blown away by the vastness of the canyon. It is just incredible and no photo can capture what it's like to be there. Andy stayed at Mather Point with the tripod while the kids and I walked along the rim trail to Yavapai Point. It was quite snowy, but the path was mostly cleared. We were amazed how many people had left the trail and climbed out onto precarious outcrops with no safety railing - madness, especially given the ice and snow around.

Once the sun had set we headed to Maswik Lodge for a cheap and cheerful dinner in the cafeteria, then back to Tusayan to check into our hotel. Last time we visited, I don't think Tusayan existed. Now it's a bustling little town just outside the park gates with lots of nice accommodation and services. We are in the Grand Canyon Squire Inn, a lovely modern hotel

which is nicely decorated for Christmas. It feels much more Christmasy here than Las Vegas with lots of lights on the trees outside and snow on the ground. The kids were super excited tonight so sleep didn't come easily, even after a soak in the hot tub. We're hoping do a short hike down into the canyon tomorrow if the trail conditions are not too snowy and icy.