

# New Mexico 2014

## Albuquerque

### Breaking Down 'Breaking Bad' Tour

Since Keeb's favourite TV series, "Breaking Bad", was shot in Albuquerque, I booked us on an afternoon "Breaking Bad" tour. Although I took the precaution to find the pickup location of the tour on a map before leaving home, Keeb advised me to still call them when we got to Albuquerque to confirm. So, there I was, rolling my eyes in my mind, making a call to satisfy him and the person at the other end said that they *had* in fact changed the pickup location and did I not get the email they sent me that morning? Luckily, the new pickup location was walking distance from the house we were sharing with our friends, Jack and Nora, in Old Town. We were picked up by a replica of the RV used in the show complete with shabby interior and were taken to many different locations featured in the show including the Octopus (aka A1 carwash), a laundry mat, the Twisters fast food restaurant (aka Los Pollos Hermanos), Walter White's house, Jesse's house and the Hi-Lo supermarket in which a nude Walter White had entered. I am acting like I know so much. The truth is I watched a two-hour summary of the first four seasons before we left home - the TV equivalent of reading Cliff's Notes the night before an exam, as Nora so helpfully pointed out.

During the tour, the air conditioning in the RV broke down and the tour guide was never able to get it fixed. I was thinking that in the UK I would tour mansions, castles, palaces, conservatories, and formal gardens. This tour was a stark contrast to all that opulence. Keeb to add a joke here... (*I got nothing ... Keeb*).

The Native American culture permeated rest of our experiences in New Mexico.

### Navajo Code Talker

We talked to Bill Toledo, a WW II Navajo Code Talker. The contribution of these veterans was featured in the movie *Wind Talkers*. As part of the US troops, they transmitted messages in the Navajo language – a code that the Japanese were never able to break. They used a double code for example the Navajo word for "potatoes" was the code for a "grenade". Bill was 90 years old and fascinating. Keeb remarked that his features were similar to a Japanese man. And Bill said that he had been mistaken for their enemy and the American soldier who reported him was then ordered to be his bodyguard! Years later, I found references to Bill in the novel *Code Talker* by Joseph Bruchac.

### Petroglyphs at Boca Negra Canyon

The canyon itself was quite impressive with its dark grey volcanic boulders. Scanning the area, I almost felt like I had been dropped into an alien landscape.

The petroglyphs were created by the ancestors of the modern Pueblo People and some were as old as 700 years. They would create the images on volcanic rock by removing the dark varnish from the surface revealing the lighter-coloured basalt underneath. The older the petroglyph, the darker the images became through oxidation and this was how their age was estimated.

## **New Mexico 2014 continued**

### **Albuquerque**

#### **Albuquerque Indian Pueblo Cultural Centre**

We saw a performance by a Jemez family. The father explained the dances as well as playing drums and chanting and his sons danced. The youngest son was six years old and he did an eagle dance with full regalia. Then his two older brothers did several dances together including a buffalo dance. These were very interesting, but the highlight was the end of the show when the audience was invited to make a circle and dance. Jack was game and as a result all of us, including Keeb joined in the final dance.

#### **Santa Fe**

Keeb and I had last visited Santa almost ten years before. The art galleries and sculpture were just as stunning as we remembered and in particular Keeb liked the whirling garden sculpture. We went to a Pin Hole camera exhibition at the New Mexico History Museum and the pieces that remained with me were a portrait of Andy Warhol taken with a pin hole camera made from a Campbell's soup tin and a "selfie" taken using a Quaker Oats container pin hole camera in a mirror. The pin hole was one of the eyes of the iconic Quaker a tiny patch had been placed over the eye like a pirate!

We also went to a Turquoise exhibition at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe. One of the artefacts was an ancient turquoise belt from Nepal with attachments: one was a toothpick and the other was an earwax spoon. Nora said she hoped the owner did not mix those two up. And now that I think about it, my Swiss Army knife is lacking an earwax spoon.

#### **Drive back to Albuquerque**

We took the Turquoise Trail scenic route back to Albuquerque from Santa Fe and Jack stopped at some quirky places in along the way.

One such place was the Cerillos Trading Post with a petting zoo containing a llama. It was crammed with dusty, old things and deep inside was a half door on which a hand lettered sign said "Museum, \$2.00 to enter". Of course, Keeb had to check it out and we saw a life-sized human skeleton, a dinosaur femur and a cardboard cut-out of Keifer Sutherland from the movie Young Guns.

#### **High Point of Trip**

Our final stop before returning to the house in Albuquerque was a winding drive to Sandia Crest which is over 10,600 ft above sea level. The mountains were named after the Spanish word for watermelon because of their reddish colour at sunset. We were not there at sunset, but I thought the view was awesome all the same.