

2025 CONUS reconnaissance trip

In 2025, starting in August I went on a car trip that took me as far north as Grand Portage, east to near Philadelphia, and south to New Orleans.

First stop on the trip was Needles CA just to get out of LA.. It was hot there and didn't cool off at night. I decided to have breakfast at the very whimsical Wagon Wheel. I asked the waitress about the gorilla theme, but she had no idea what originated it. She pointed out that there was also a UFO alien theme. Some photos at

[Needles](#)

Departing Needles the temperature got up to 110°F. There were also torrential downpours that brought the temperature down locally to a very steamy 70°F. What extremes! Amazing that I saw some motorcyclists. Glad I don't ride on long trips anymore. Last one was in 2015 to Newfoundland

Got some relief at a cooler but rainy Flagstaff. Took a tour of the Riordan Mansion, a stealthy Craftsman display case. The tour was worth it.

[Riordan Mansion](#)

Also made it to the self-guided Elden Pueblo site on the outskirts of town: This was a relatively temporary site built to take advantage of a favorable climate burp.

[Elden Pueblo](#)

The next day I stopped at Homolovi State Park and took a short hot hike to one archaeological site that is accessible via concrete paths. Also drove down to the river where there is another site that has been excavated but really isn't accessible except for some information panels.

[Homolovi State Park](#)

Pulling out of Albuquerque I first stopped at **Rio Grande Nature Center State Park**

Which includes a very nice visitor center and many trails and gardens. The docent was very helpful with advice and the visitor center has a very impressive viewing room that is worth a view. What look like D-Day landing traps were an attempt to control storm surges.

[Rio Grande Nature Center State Park](#)

The next leg was to Pueblo, Colorado but on the way to Santa Fe stopped at the La Bajada rest stop that I thought was worth noting. Very informative panels about women in the earlier period.

[La Bajada rest stop](#)

The next day after waking up in Pueblo I went to the Pueblo Heritage Museum.

[Pueblo Heritage](#)

While waiting for the museum to open I crossed the street to the open air Pueblo Railway Museum which is really open only on weekends or by arrangement. The very impressive train station is still there and you can see some exhibits inside and learn about bordellos. Before the

great and very deadly 1921 flood, the station was even bigger. I learned that the lower levels were inundated with mud which has never been cleared. The museum itself was quite interesting.

From there went to the Steelworks Center of the West, located in the company's former hospital building.

[Steelworks Center of the West](#)

This is really the company museum of what was known as CF&I. At one time it had a rather peculiar Sociological department.

Made the short drive to Colorado Springs to visit the National Museum of WW 2 Aviation which had pretty good exhibits. I took exception to some of their commentary about Japanese Americans.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WW2Aviation2025/index.html>

Also visited once before in 2015

<http://ikemi.info/graphics2015/WW2Aviation2015/index.html> [2015]

I spent the night in Colorado Springs after running into a heavy downpour while resupplying at a local Trader Joe's. Got up to see the fascinating Western Museum of Mining & Industry which included working displays. Don't forget to walk up the hill to see more exhibits and back towards the entrance.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Mining2025/index.html>

From there it's on to Denver where I visited the Colorado Railroad Museum. This facility was built as a museum and wasn't originally part of a railroad but it does boast a roundhouse and a Pikes Peak coach.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/ColoradoTrainMuseum2025/index.html>

The next day after spending the night in Denver I went to the Forney, a transportation museum that includes a Big Boy locomotive, many cars, and a few airplanes. Nice displays of railroad china. Liked the streetcar street scene. Context was also provided for some of the cars and trains cars.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Forney2025/index.html>

Thought I was just going to kill some time leaving Denver, but the Wings over the Rockies Air & Space Museum was much bigger than I had expected. I parked in back unknowingly but in front a B-52 stands guard over the neighboring beer garden. The interior is dominated by the very rare B-1A. Plenty of other important airplanes and space vehicles, with a lot of educational displays. Of course Wright Brothers displays.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WingsOverRockies2025/index.html>

Exited to Strasburg where I car-camped at the KOA. On the way to Wakeeney made an unplanned stop at the Limon Heritage Museum. Besides the initial well filled building you can go outside and proceed to farm equipment, a train car you can enter, and the staffed train station with native American artifacts and model trains. Next to it is a school house. If you want to keep going, there is a park with a display of windmills.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Limon2025/index.html>

Next car camped at the KOA Wakeeney.

From there visited Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Refuge which has a large visitor center with many displays and even live animals as you can see in the gallery. Across the street is the self-guided auto tour with plenty of birds. One of the most impressive refuges.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/CheyenneBottoms2025/index.html>

Not too far away is Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, although I hit some rain going there. As I had been warned, the visitor center was closed. Also, most of the vehicle tour road was not passable due to the rain. Mosquitoes around the visitor center trail were incredibly aggressive. I did make it to the nearby observation platform. It was definitely time to make use of the big binoculars I had been packing along.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Quivira2025/index.html>

Since my visit to Quivira was short I looked on Google maps for another target and found Cosmosphere in Hutchison. This space exploration museum caught me entirely by surprise. Started by a determined woman as a planetarium, Cosmosphere has many interesting displays such as Apollo 13, SR-71, and V-1 and V-2 history. The full scale model of the Apollo-Soyuz docking is something to see. Glad I stumbled on this one. I was lucky to hit it on a day with extended hours.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Cosmosphere2025/index.html>

The next day, last day of the month, I paid a quick visit to the compact Wichita Art Museum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WAM2025/index.html>

And then to the very large Botanica which boasts a carousel as well as many gardens,

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Botanica2025/index.html>

To round out the day I drove over to the Kansas Aviation Museum where the museum building is one of the main reasons for a visit.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/KansasAviation2025/index.html>

The next day I got lost and found the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains where I had a very pleasant walk.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Dyck2025/index.html>

It was the perfect warm-up for the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Facilities include a large visitor center and a preserved ranch with a very large barn full of exhibits and ranch house you

can tour. A little hike away is a restored stone school house. From there I took a trail that looped around back to the visitor center. I put plenty of insect repellent on the bottom of my pants legs.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Tallgrass2025/index.html>

The next day I started off with a walk in the very beautiful Ted Ensley Gardens in Topeka.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Tallgrass2025/index.html>

Back in town I visited the Old Prairie Town and Ward-Meade Botanical Garden on a day when only the grounds were open. Normally it is a living history park with the buildings open and costumed docents. I was allowed into a building which was open for maintenance. There is a Japanese garden in the botanical garden.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WardMeade2025/index.html>

That prepared me to visit the Japanese garden in the Topeka Zoo. The Japanese Garden is also a shrine for trailblazer Kay McFarland. Outside of the garden were plenty of animatronic dinosaurs as well as real live animals such as the giraffes. Getting to see them up close was very impressive.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/TopekaZoo2025/index.html>

The same day I visited Mount Mitchell Heritage Prairie Park which has some trails that nearly intersect part of the Underground Railroad. At the top of the hill is a Native American burial site. I was the only one there. Facilities are only a kiosk and a pit toilet, but the view from the top gives you a good feel for the Prairie. I wasn't going to go all the way up, but my feet kept going.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/MtMitchell2025/index.html>

Finally, to end the day I got an Oz fix at the Oz Museum in Warnego. Good complement to the Oz experience I had last year in Liberal. This one concentrated more on background material.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/OzMuseum2025/index.html>

Sticking to the Prairie theme, I visited the Homestead National Historical Park which has two very extensive visitor centers and yet another restored school house. You have to ask to have the school house opened for you and in my case I was lucky enough to get a personal guided tour from a ranger. Took a nice long loop hike on their trails.
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Homestead2025/index.html>

I foolishly spent only an hour at the University of Nebraska State Museum - Morrill Hall right before it closed. I could have spent half a day there, especially on the

displays explaining the prairie I had visited. Limited free visitor parking across from the museum, not in the large adjacent parking lot.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip//NebraskaStateMuseum2025/index.html>

From my motel that night I was able to walk to see the Giant Paper Airplane. You can see photos if you search for it on Google Maps.

The next day was dedicated to the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum Near Ashland Nebraska. The mystery plane was the British Vulcan bomber being restored. Turns out there was a squadron of nuclear armed Vulcans stationed at nearby Offutt Air Base, former headquarters of SAC and location of the command bunker President Bush used. One of the most dramatic displays of an SR-71.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/SAC2025/index.html>

The next day was also an all day day at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, which is the most digitized venue I have seen. Entry was all by touch screen as far as I could tell. This was a very comprehensive and huge zoo covering everything from their desert dome to the seal pool. It was also kind of their off-season so some areas were mostly shut down, but there was still plenty to see. Unfortunately their train system was shut down. Kind of worth the pricey admission.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/OmahaZoo2025/index.html>

Afterwards made a detour to the Malcom X memorial. You park and take some steps down to a plaza. Looks like there is work in process. See the link.

<https://malcolmxfoundation.org/>

The next day was mainly a transit day with stops at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and Asian Gardens and the Village of Yesteryear. I had visited the garden a few years ago but it was worthwhile to see where it had gone. Yet another dome, this time to protect exotic plants, and well landscaped walkways and a pool. There is also a very nice outdoor waterfall gushing over a concrete slab.

The Asian Garden has grown a little since my last stop.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/DesMoines2025/index.html>

The Village of Yesteryear is part of the Steele County History Center in Owatonna. Both were closed when I visited but you could walk through the collection of vintage buildings and peek through the windows. Looked well kept-up. Near my very peculiar motel there was also a restored train station with not a lot of context, but it was in good condition. It appeared to be used for corporate hospitality.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Yesteryear2025/index.html>

Another almost all day stop was at the Minneapolis Institute of Art which I had visited before on another trip. This is one of the largest museums in the US, so it is always worth a visit.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/MIA2025/index.html>

I had a little bit of extra time so I made a side trip out to the Camp Savage marker where Nisei interpreters and translators were trained for military intelligence (MIS). It is adjacent to a large dog park.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/CampSavage2025/index.html>

The camp was replaced by facilities at Fort Snelling.

<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=41673>

<https://www.savagemn.gov/our-city/about-savage/history#ad-image-4>

I had wanted to re-visit Fort Snelling, where my uncle trained for MIS, but it was closed on the day when I was there. You can take a virtual tour at

<https://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling/activities/virtual-tour>

And read more at

<https://www.nps.gov/miss/learn/historyculture/langschool.htm>

On the same day I also visited the Normandale Japanese Garden, mainly since it was nearby.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/NormandaleJapanese2025/index.html>

I had read a travel article for Duluth and that was my next stop. My first stop was the Lake Superior Maritime Visitor Center. The adjacent parking lot I had to pay for, so that became my base of operations for the day. Adjacent picnic tables were convenient, but, as was becoming normal for me, renovations were proceeding at the grounds of the visitor center. The visitor center itself, run by the Army Corps of Engineers, was open and it packed a lot of content into its confined space.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Maritime2025/index.html>

It was also within good viewing and walking distance of the famous bridge.

Next was a long walk past the William A Irvin Museum, a moored ship, to the St. Louis County Depot which houses the St. Louis County Historical Society and the Lake Superior Railroad Museum. A lot to see here and I could easily have spent more time. Did learn that Duluth was a hub of air defense during the World War with a SAGE installation near the airport. Learned about them during my trip to the Computer History Museum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025/ComputerHistory2025/index.html>

There was also a BOMARC missile site defending all of this.

Downstairs in the depot is the train museum, covered of course. Many good displays and interesting engines such as the all electric locomotive from a time when they were thinking of expanding electric train lines. Apparently they have train rides on the right day of the week and year.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Duluth2025/index.html>

More walking to get to the Great Lakes Aquarium. Seems like a lot of empty space at first but once you get oriented there are plenty of interesting exhibits, such as tanks of sturgeon.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/DuluthAquarium2025/index.html>

Got to cross the Minnesota Slip Bridge on the way back to my car and paid a visit to Duluth Packs. Also had to walk out to midspan on the Aerial Lift Bridge.

After I checked-in to my motel I realized that I wasn't that far from the former SAGE building so I had to take a drive out to see it. For more information:

<https://ss.sites.mtu.edu/mhugl/2016/10/16/duluth-mn-sage-direction-center/>

And

https://fortwiki.com/Duluth_SAGE_Direction_Center_DC-10

The building has been re-purposed and is still in use.

The next leg of my trip was to see Grand Portage. Starting off early, I took another short detour to see if I could get a glance at the BOMARC bunkers to the east of the airport. Navigating by Google aerial images, I found that they are on private industrial property. I could get a view and take some pictures from a distance outside of the gate, but I was too lazy to try to get permission to enter, so that was good enough for me. My understanding is that they are currently used for storage. There are very few BOMARC missiles left. For a photos of BOMARCs erected from their bunkers, although not at Duluth, see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Tactical_Missile_Squadron

Back to regular sightseeing. The road from Duluth to Grand Portage is very scenic and has a few notable sights along the way. The first for me was Gooseberry Falls. This state park has a large parking lot not too far off the road, but it was nearly full when I was there. A short walk takes you to a large visitor center where they will point you in the right direction. The trails are mostly good and there are about 3 waterfalls to see, plus you can go wandering off on other trails if you get carried away. I was lucky enough to talk to a scientist in waders who with his partner were taking measurements in the river.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/GooseberryFalls2025/index.html>

My next stop was at Split Rock Lighthouse. Once again, the site was under renovation but the light house and one of the lighthouse keeper dwellings were accessible. This did mean discounted admission!. There is also a comprehensive museum. A lot to see here. The light is actually driven by a working clockwork mechanism.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/SplitRock2025/index.html>

The same day I made it to Grand Portage where there is a very nice visitor center and museum. A short walk from it is a re-creation of the large trading post that was there, with docents in period costumes. There are tribal limitations on what can be built on the site, but I was told that the historical stockade would actually have been filled with more buildings and encampments. Behind the museum is a trail that takes you to a vantage point where you can kind of see where the trail went. Down it would have come the beaver pelts which were the economic engine. There is an exhibit that shows how the pelts were processed into hats, a very dangerous and poisonous process.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/GrandPortage2025/index.html>

In the area lodgings were mainly resorts that were booked up, but Grand Portage has a campground over the little marina. I made good use of my cold weather down sleeping bag and I got to see a full moon over the water.

The next day I backtracked with a stop at Cross River Falls which goes right under the road. Convenient parking lots on both sides of the road so you don't have to kill yourself. You can walk right back to the bridge spanning the falls and get a good look.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/CrossRiver2025/index.html>

Driving back to Duluth and out of it I came across the Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center which is a sort of museum and shrine for World War II ace Dick Bong. There is a restored P-38 inside as well as exhibits on Bong, the war, and local history including modern war protests of all things. Kind of an interesting break.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Bong2025/index.html>

The next day was dedicated to visiting the National Railroad Museum near Green Bay. Once again I was hit by the renovation curse. My timing was off by a week or so since they were in the middle of moving exhibits to a big new exhibit hall. I only got to see a fraction of what they have but I did get to go on a train ride. A highlight was the train Eisenhower used in England.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/GreenBay2025/index.html>

The next day along the way I stopped at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Probably the biggest draw for this expensive to visit museum is the museum building itself. The gift shop has a mysterious second floor.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/MilwaukeeArt2025/index.html>

The next day I visited one of my planned destinations, the Illinois Railway Museum. This is a good example of a hobby that got way out of control. Got 2 train rides, but missed the street car. I got to ride a similar streetcar in St. Louis last year. Too much to see and experience and missed most of the indoor exhibits although I was there almost all day. I especially wanted to see the turbine powered locomotive. Too bad they don't display it with the innards exposed.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/IRM2025/index.html>

The next day was supposed to be a transit day but I noticed the Morton Arboretum on the map. The Arboretum is on the grounds of the Morton mansion that was torn down. Yes, those Mortons. No Morton salt hats in the gift shop, but you can get other trinkets made in the shape of the logo. Wonderful gardens to walk and 2 auto trails. This was my first opportunity to pull out my folding bicycle and rode both of these trails. Unfortunately the visitor center on one trail was closed for a private event. There are also foot paths off the auto route so you could spend a lot of time at this place.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Morton2025/index.html>

The next day as I approached Dayton, a planned destination, I stopped at the museum of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. I am a member so I got in for free. I was also the only visitor. If you are into model airplanes and rotor craft, this place is worth a visit.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/AMA2025/index.html>

The same day striking into Dayton itself, a good half day excursion was Wergerzyn Garden which has formal gardens and a walking trail

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Wergerzyn2025/index.html>

Stayed 2 nights at the KOA just outside of Dayton which was my last car camping experience as I was starting to come down with a cold. Stopping and resting would probably have been a good idea, but I plugged on and visited the USAF Museum. Not my first visit and this time I concentrated on the gallery that concentrated on the early history of aviation. I also made sure this time to check out the YF-12A which I had bypassed on previous trips. Every time I have visited I have found new things. This time I also checked out the extensive Wright Brothers exhibit.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/USAF2025/index.html>

http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce1_2024/index.htm [2024]

http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce2_2024/index.htm [2024]

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2017EclipseTrip/AirForceMuseum2017/index.html> [2017]

The next day was mostly dedicated to the Wright family history, starting with a trip to the family resting place at Woodland Cemetery. Guest services are welcoming and will provide you with a map. Nearby is the grave of Orville's friend, Paul Dunbar.

[Woodland Cemetery](#)

Next stopped at the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. I might have assumed that the visitor center would be closed for renovations, but at least the restored bike shop (4TH of 6) was open to visit. There was a branch shop downtown at the same time, which I think makes the total come out to 6 shops. This is the only restored bike shop at its original location. Keep in mind that the last bike shop and the Wright home were hijacked by Henry Ford and are now in Michigan. That will be coming up on this trip next. This was not my first visit. I did stop here last year on my Great Eclipse Expedition but the visitor center was closed. I did walk around to see the Dunbar home (closed) and the facade and statue to represent Orville's last workshop. See

[Dayton Aviation](#)

I also visited in 2015

<http://ikemi.info/graphics2015/DaytonAviationHistory2015/index.html> [2015]

I did stop here after hours last year on my Great Eclipse Expedition. I did walk around then and saw some of the other memorials.

Look towards the end of this gallery:

[Dayton and Carillon Historical Park](#) [2024]

The life size sculpture of the Wright Flyer in flight with the 2 brothers is especially impressive.

In 2015 I also walked around Huffman Field

<http://ikemi.info/graphics2015/HuffmanField2015/index.html> [2015]

Next it was on to Carillon Historical Park to catch the tour of Hawthorn House. I had missed the tour last year although I did drive up to the house. The tour was very informative.

[Hawthorn Hill](#)

I also spent the rest of the day at Carillon Park, checking out displays I had breezed through before, such as the school house (with live docent!) and the carousel. The carousel works but it was built for the park and every bit of Dayton history is memorialized on the carousel.

[Carillon Park](#)

Also concentrated on the Wright Brothers National Museum within the park. There are a number of Wright displays in various museums, but this one has the biggest collection of information on the Wright family, plus the restored Wright Flyer 3. You can also see the canoe Orville used in France in case of emergency water landings. There is a replica of the bicycle shop with an animatronic Kate Wright answering the phone.

[Wright Brothers National Museum](#)

Decided to pay another visit to Greenfield Village to see the Wright Family home and the relocated fifth (sixth?) bicycle shop among other things. Went light on the Henry Ford itself although I did a walk-through. Had to ride the train again and visit the roundhouse. Afternoon tea had already been discontinued for the season. Missed it yet again! Rode the carousel, as well as a Model T, Model T bus, and the horse drawn coach.

Visited the farm and got to see a woman in full costume plowing the field. Got to the farmhouse too late to see lunch prepared but got to learn what happens to the scraps. Had a nice Twilight Zone experience visiting the shops with the costumed docents.

[The Henry Ford and Greenfield Village](#)

In 2015 I was smart enough to spend 2 days at Greenfield Village:

<http://ikemi.info/graphics2015/Greenfield2015Day1/index.html> [2015]

<http://ikemi.info/graphics2015/Greenfield2015Day1/index.html> [2015]

Dropped back down southwards with a stop in Pittsburgh to revisit the Frick. Last time I was here I only had time to see the galleries.

[Frick Art & Historical Center](#) [2024]

This time I wanted to spend more time in the auto museum and take the mansion tour. The mansion tour turned out to be more about the history of the family and its role in the Gilded Age rather than the architectural aspects of the mansion itself. I learned that aspect is covered in a different tour. Nonetheless it was an interesting tour and would-be oligarchs who want to bring back the Gilded Age should be aware of some of the consequences. There was a reason Carnegie decided it was better to give away his money than be dead.

[Frick](#)

Not to be confused with the Frick Collection in New York.

Another planned re-visit was to the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA. Last time I spent too much time on the upper floor and on demonstrations (how to fire a Civil War rifle) and had to rush through the bottom floor. I like this one better than the one in Richmond.

[The National Civil War Museum](#)

American Civil War Museum for comparison:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CivilWar2024/index.htm>

For some reason I had the Reading Museum on my itinerary and I am not sure quite why. It was pleasant enough and there is a nice sculpture garden around it. The only

problem was that part of the path was blocked by a private party, but I managed to get around it.

[Reading Public Museum](#)

After a detour to the vicinity west of Philadelphia to visit a friend, I swung south to once more visit the Civil War battlefields near Richmond. I had visited Cold Harbor last year and this time I started with [Gaines' Mill Battlefield](#) from the earlier part of the war.

Moving forward in time I drove to the nearby Forts Harrison and Hoke. Like many Civil War forts these were earthworks. Vegetation grows fast in that part of the world so even with mowing you have to use your imagination a little to get an idea of what the forts must have been like. Plenty more to see but I figured I had gotten a pretty good idea, so like Grant, I swung down to Petersburg Battlefield.

[Forts Harrison and Hoke](#)

Didn't try to see everything but did visit the very comprehensive Petersburg National Battlefield Eastern Front Unit Visitor Center, which is the main hub for visiting the site which includes a 16 stop driving tour which takes you through all 4 units of the battlefield. I only took the walk from the visitor center and the next day I explored the small loop that takes you to The Crater. As usual on this trip, this route was closed to cars due to roadwork, but it was open to foot traffic and bicycles. In spite of my poor health. I did unlimber my bicycle for the second and final time. The Crater has filled in with time and become overgrown, but you can still see it if you know where to look. I walked right past it at first and on the Tunnel entrance.

[Petersburg Battlefield](#)

I spent more time than planned at Petersburg so I got to Town Creek right as it closed. However, I ran into a curator just as he was locking up and he took pity on me and let me go through the palisades and up to the mound itself. There is just one mound extant here but it is interesting since it is such an outlier, being in a remote area as mounds go, as I understand it. The site has a restored palisade, which you don't see too often and a couple of restored temples.

[Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site](#)

The next destination was the large Ocmulgee Mounds. This national park has a large visitor center and museum as well as an auto route as well as foot trails. The weather wasn't too bad when I arrived, but towards the end of the day it was starting to get wet as I beat a retreat to my car. I had started out on the foot paths but had

then switched over to the auto route when I started to realize how large the site is. Glad I did. The weather didn't help my cold any. Fascinating place.

[Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park](#)

Switching gears again I headed to Robinson AFB for the Museum of Aviation. You don't need a base pass to access the museum. This is a fairly large and extensive museum with a large section on the Tuskegee Airmen. There is sort of a shrine to local hero Robert Scott who wrote God is my Copilot.

[Museum of Aviation](#)

The next day decided to revisit Columbus where last year I visited the National Civil War Naval Museum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CivilWarNaval2024/index.htm> [2024]

They had told me that the ironworks still existed as a convention center, although the Civil War docks are gone. The Columbus ironworks were the second largest in the Confederacy after the Tredgar works in Richmond. Also visited the approximate area where one of the last battles of the Civil War was fought, tragically after the war was over.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Columbus2025/index.html>

For a driving break I stopped at the very pleasant Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. Also stopped at the Museum of Alabama but most of it was closed off for renovation.

[Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and Museum of Alabama](#)

Next was another planned destination. Last year I drove past the entrance of Port Hudson State Historic Site without realizing what it was. After a little research I decided I had to see it. This was one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Civil War, a testament to what happens when political appointees with no training, talent, or expertise are put in charge. There is a good visitor center which tells the story of the siege and battles. There were more trails than I could cover, but as usual they cover only a portion of the battlefield. There are some reconstructions along the trails.

[Port Hudson State Historic Site](#)

Moving back in time again, a little north of Port Hudson is the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. This is a large park with a visitor center and museum. These mounds were still in use when the Europeans arrived.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/GrandvillageoftheNatchez2025/index.html>

Traveling a little up the Natchez Trace Parkway you can visit the related Emerald Mound. This is a single mound but it is a big one. The parking lot is actually about half way up the mound. It is

big enough for an entire playing field, for whatever sport the builders practiced. There is a smaller mound on top of the mound. Don't get fooled and think that is the Emerald Mound.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/EmeraldMound2025/index.html>

Moving farther north is Winterville Mounds. Per my normal luck the visitor center was shut down for some kind of renovations. It looked like a very nice visitor center. Maintenance was still being performed on the site and you can walk around the large site.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WintervilleMounds2025/index.html>

Parkin Archeological State Park was a stop I had missed on the previous trip, so I wanted to see it this time. Of course I went there on a day when the visitor center was closed, but a gentleman who emerged from a back door said it was okay to tour the site. There is a path laid out for visitors to follow which tells you the story of the mound. There is also a side trip to a restored segregated school house.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Parkin2025/index.html>

Decades ago I made a rather rushed tour of the Oklahoma City Museum of Art so I wanted to make a rather more relaxed visit. The main reasons to see this museum are the extensive displays of Chihuly glass.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/OKCMOA2025/index.html>

Since I was passing through Amarillo I wanted to see something so I stopped at the Amarillo Museum of Art. I enjoyed their interactive room. Of course, some of the galleries were being renovated. I could enter but they were in disarray without much signage.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/AmarilloArt2025/index.html>

Wanting to stretch my legs, I took a hike at Wildcat Bluff Nature Center after paying the reasonable entrance fee. Made a loop to the windmill and bluffs.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/WildcatBluff2025/index.html>

Having to pass through Holbrook, I took a break at the Navajo County Historical Center since it was open for once when I was there.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/Holbrook2025/index.html>

Going back through Albuquerque I made my first visit to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center although I have been to the city many times. They were having dance demonstrations and participation in the large enclosed courtyard. I was interested in trying the food but the wait was too long. Historical exhibits about the history and struggles of the pueblos.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/IndianPueblo2025/index.html>

I revisited ABQ Biopark. Last year the farm area was closed for renovations but this time it was open but still a work in progress. I also took a walk through the bosque which I don't remember

having discovered before. The pond at the Japanese Garden looked like it could use some cleaning.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/ABQBiopark2025/index.html>

My final tourist activity was at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. I hadn't been too impressed during a visit long ago, but this time I actually pulled out one of the folding guest stools so I could really concentrate on some of the displays. Maybe it was because I am more interested in Native American cultures these days.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2025trip/MuseumNorthernArizona2025/index.html>

So, in spite of getting sick half way through the trip I achieved most of my goals. I was thinking of visiting Shiloh Mounds but the impending government shut down made me decide to give up on that. I would have liked to visit Fermilab in Chicago but it was booked out way in advance. Ligo would have been nice but it is only open once a month which makes scheduling hard. If I had been feeling better I would have gone on longer hikes in places like Port Hudson. I was booking lodging in advance which made my schedule inflexible. If I go on another trip like this I will try to schedule real rest days and long layovers in interesting places. New points of interest always pop up. I could go back to Green Bay and see if the railway move worked out. I could always spend more time at the Air Force Museum in Dayton and I would like to revisit the visitor center in town when it reopens. I would like to visit the carousel museum in Leavenworth. I drove past the Tuskegee Airmen National Historical Site and now wish I had stopped there. On the other hand I did stumble on some places like Morton Gardens and Cosmosphere.

According to Travelocity, everywhere I went was less busy than usual.