

The 2024 Great Eclipse Expedition.

After the previous eclipse experience, I thought I might as well do another once since it would be reasonably accessible within the United States. Wishing to avoid crowds and traffic, I did not target the optimal viewing site, instead heading for Missouri again. As you will see, I was not successful in avoiding traffic after all.

First outbound stop was at the Coachella Valley History Museum.

<https://www.cvhm.org/>

I am into local museums and I thought this one was delightful. My photos are at:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Indio2024/index.htm>

Next stop was Kitt Peak via Ajo, AZ. I wanted to visit the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, but it was closed when I visited. The little motel where I stayed lost its power until the next day so that also limited my options.

Finally on to Kitt Peak and the steep climb to the visitor center. It was snowing when I got there. I put on all the cold weather gear and boots and it was barely enough. You have to go on a tour to visit. I missed the first tour I wanted to go on, but it was cancelled and replaced with the one I wanted, so sometimes I luck out. When my parents took us there long ago the solar telescope was still operating. These days it's kind of sad to look into the shaft via the visitor windows and see the unused equipment that is left. We did get to see the new visitor area being there that was not quite ready for primetime. We did get to see where some of the instruments were once located.

Photos at:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/KittPeak2024/index.htm>

Had to visit the Pima Air Museum and it was a good idea since it had expanded since my last visit. Overjoyed to a PB4Y-2, one of my favorite planes and very rare restored to combat configuration, at least cosmetically. Some were used for fire fighting so you could see them for a while in civilian configuration.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Pima2024/index.htm>

No trip to the Boneyard since I saw that on my last trip there.

On my Trinity trip didn't see much of Alamogordo itself so I paid Tularosa Basin Museum of History for some local history.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Alamagordo2024/index.htm>

Crossed the street to take a pleasant break at the Alameda Park Zoo

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AlamedaZoo2024/index.htm>

Checked to see if the Space History Museum was still there. Although sort of forlorn and isolated, it's still there although maybe not with the same energy as when I first visited it.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/SpaceHistory2024/index.htm>

A highpoint is that includes part of the rocket sled as well as what looked like part of the DC-X Delta Clipper. The clipper made vertical landings way before Space X.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonnell\\_Douglas\\_DC-X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonnell_Douglas_DC-X)

AI says that is the wreckage from the crash.

Warmed up at the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge which I enjoyed driving and walking around. Kind of near Roswell.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/BitterLake2024/index.htm>

On to Texas for a sidetrip to a little bigger museum, the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Panhandle2024/index.htm>

Back up to the small Amarillo Botanical Gardens. Mainly a place to visit if you are already there, but nice enough.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Amarillo2024/index.htm>

On to Oklahoma and the Great Plains Museum where you can experience what it's like to be in a tornado (shelter). Started to realize that I was in tornado country in tornado season.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/GreatPlains2024/index.htm>

Got to see real live prairie dogs who have taken over the display yard in back. They jokingly told me I could take some home with me since they are being overrun.

A little more green at the Will Rogers Gardens in Oklahoma City. My trip was a little early in the year (can't control when eclipses happen) so a lot of the gardens I visited were just getting started. Nevertheless, enjoyed walking this garden.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/WillRogers2024/index.htm>

Also hit the aptly named Myriad Gardens within the heart of the city, equipped with a giant cylindrical greenhouse as well as lush outdoor gardens. Spectacular.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Myriad2024/index.htm>

Another focus of my trip was Native American sites and the first such destination was Spiro Mounds. This resource is being rediscovered so to speak. Nice walk there.

<https://www.okhistory.org/sites/spiromounds>

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Spiro2024/index.htm>

If you like tales of lawmen in the Wild West, Fort Smith National Historical is the place to visit. Law and order was projected from the courtroom there to Indian Territory. Marshalls such as

Bass Reeves operated from Fort Smith. Fort Smith is also associated with the Civil War and unfortunately the Trail of Tears.

Springfield Botanic Gardens are extensive and even include a Japanese Garden with separate admission, as well as a farm site. Also many formal gardens.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Springfield2024/index.htm>

Went downtown to visit the Illinois State Museum in Bloomington. The best thing was the prehistoric fish head bursting out of the wall.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/IllinoisMuseum2024/index.htm>

Not too far away was the Washington Park Botanical Garden, A little early in the year for it except for the flower show in the green house.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/WashingtonBotanical2024/index.htm>

Next was a major stop on my trip, Argonne National Labs. On a motorcycle trip long ago I had tried to visit the labs and learned that you needed reservations. This time I had my reservation, which was a major planning constraint for this trip, after the eclipse, of course. A fitting complement to my Idaho trip last year to EBR-1, since Idaho National Labs were once part of Argonne.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Argonne2024/index.htm>

Visited the Urbana University of Illinois campus to see:

Japan House (not usually open to the public except for the grounds)

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/JapanHouse2024/index.htm>

Spurlock Museum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Spurlock2024/index.htm>

Krannery Museum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Krannert2024/index.htm>

U. of Illinois Arboretum

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/UIArboretum2024/index.htm>

On to St. Louis to stage for the Eclipse. While there I went to see the extensive if grandiosely titled National Museum of Transportation. Liked the streetcar ride and waited out a downpour in a railroad reefer car. Spent the whole day there.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Transportation2024/index.htm>

I had made reservations for the eclipse a year in advance and at the last minute the motel cancelled them, probably because they figured they could make more money at the last minute. This forced me to find a motel to the west of St. Louis. As a result I had to drive all morning. I had been watching the weather forecasts and I had changed my destination to Poplar Bluff.

There was an eclipse festival at the local high school stadium so for \$5 I was able to get save parking near a bathroom and \$2 hot dogs. Even got another pair of eclipse glasses, although I had come with a full box of them. I set up my camera and tripod in the parking lot. After the not so great results last time, I brought a very sturdy tripod with a gimbal. This time I was using a full frame Lumix camera with an adequate 100-400mm zoom. Didn't want to go for one of the real high end ones. I hadn't bothered to get an eclipse filter, so I couldn't get any shots of the partial eclipse. Too late to do anything about that. At full eclipse I noticed some red artifacts at the edge of the sun. Lens defects? Later, at the Carnegie Observatories open house in Pasadena, I learned that those artifacts were real. Unfortunately I didn't catch them in any of my photos. Anyway, Mission Accomplished.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Eclipse2024/index.htm>

Leaving Poplar Bluff, it was time to pay the piper heading for my motel room in Memphis TN. That was the worst traffic jam I'd ever seen in my life. I was lucky that my poor motel was on the outskirts of town so I suffered less than others.

The weather was now bad and I was beat so I decided to spend two nights in Memphis, which I had been through before. The motel room was surprisingly nice and a shopping mall was next door so that made life easy. I did decide to go out to the archaeological site at Chucalissa. Kind of a challenge getting there with road work, but I finally figured out the backdoor approach.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Chucalissa2024/index.htm>

Learned that there were some mounds downtown I could have visited.

On the way out I missed Parkin Archeological State Park

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkin\\_Archeological\\_State\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkin_Archeological_State_Park)

but made it to Plum Bayou Mounds near Little Rock. Still wet weather and some of the trails were flooded, but got to see enough. Near the water there had been some wooden walkways, but they had deteriorated.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plum\\_Bayou\\_Mounds\\_Archeological\\_State\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plum_Bayou_Mounds_Archeological_State_Park)

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/PlumBayou2024/index.htm>

Switching gears, next headed to Rohwer Heritage Site.

<https://rohwer.astate.edu/>

Again, the site, especially the cemetery, was flooded, so there was a limit to how much I could wander around. Also, some surviving buildings are on private property.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Rohwer2024/index.htm>

And the Rohwer Jerome Museum in town.

<https://rohwer.astate.edu/plan-your-visit/museum/>

While I was at this local museum there was alos a bus load of school kids, so I volunteered to answer what questions they had. Hope I didn't mislead them too much.

Another high point of my trip was visiting Poverty Point.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty\\_Point](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_Point)

The age and size of this site are impressive. My GPS did try to get me killed on the way there.  
<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/PovertyPoint2024/index.htm>

Next it was time to swing towards Baton Rouge. Unfortunately I missed Port Hudson along the way.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Port\\_Hudson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Port_Hudson)

<https://www.lastateparks.com/historic-sites/port-hudson-state-historic-site>

The Capitol Park Museum was pretty interesting:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CapitolPark2024/index.htm>

I did visit the Art and Science Musuem. Although a good base for exploring the area, there wasn't too much there.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/ArtScience2024/index.htm>

Across the street you can visit the Old Capitol and learn how much one of their governors was revered.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/OldCapitol2024/index.htm>

Down the street is the USS Kidd, the only US warship allowed to fly the Jolly Roger.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS\\_Kidd\\_\(DD-661\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Kidd_(DD-661))

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Kidd2024/index.htm>

I was lucky to see it since not too long afterwards it was towed out for restoration.

The next day I visited the very impressive New Orleans Museum of Art.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/NOMA2024/index.htm>

And the extensive sculpture gardens.

<http://ikemi.info/sculpture2024/index.htm>

It was an all day affair at the World War II Museum. Probably didn't see everything as much as I would have liked.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/WWII2024/index.htm>

Off to Alabama for the extensive Moundville Archaeological Park

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Moundville2024/index.htm>

Birmingham Botanical Gardens seem to just keep on going. Not obvious how large it is when you first enter. Very nice Japanese garden.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/BBG2024/index.htm>

Privately owned and free Aldridge Gardens are pleasant if you are in the area.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Aldridge2024/index.htm>

The Birmingham Museum of Art had an exhibition of Disney costumes. Even for their animated films, real costumes were created for visualization. Made me search for the out of print book.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/BMOA2024/index.htm>

Another major stop was the Barber Vintage Motorcycle Museum. This was an all day project, but it started pouring when I wanted to go see the track. There were a few bikes missing, but the collection is impressive.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Barber2024/index.htm>

On to Georgia for the very fun National Civil War Naval Museum. The location makes sense after you learn that a major Confederate shipyard was nearby. Unfortunately, not too much of it is left, but the exhibits in the museum are quite impressive. Caused me to buy more books. Could have spent more time reading the history timeline they had posted.

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

Journeyed to the National Infantry Museum and its grounds.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Infantry2024/index.htm>

Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site in Georgia was my next stop. Out of respect for Native Americans, in many museums exhibits have been removed until it can be determined if and how they should be displayed. This means empty displays or posters replacing displays.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Etowah2024/index.htm>

This was especially brought home to me when I visited the McClung Museum at the University of Tennessee where all of the Native American exhibits had been removed. This museum had especially been recommended in one of my guide books.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/McClung2024/index.htm>

So I went down the street to visit the UT Botanical Gardens

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/UTBotanical2024/index.htm>

One of the major goals of this trip after the eclipse was to visit Oak Ridge. First stop, after a little searching, was the American Museum of Science and Energy. This was a good starting point since the docent told what to look for related to the Manhattan Project.

My first stop was at the Y-12 History Center, located inside of a still operating building. You need to get rung in by a security guard. I think this was formerly one of the Calutron buildings.

[http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Y12\\_2024/index.htm](http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Y12_2024/index.htm)

Next stop was the K-25 History Center, off in the middle of nowhere, as it was meant to be. Nearby at one time was the biggest building in the world, the gaseous diffusion separation plant. It has since been dismantled. This is a very well done and detailed museum that really makes the trip worthwhile.

[http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/K25\\_2024/index.htm](http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/K25_2024/index.htm)

Heading towards Green Banks, my next destination, a visitor center told me about the Birthplace of Country Music Museum in Bristol VA. Learned about a genre of music I don't normally follow and bought a couple of albums.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CountryMusic2024/index.htm>

Found a brewery across the street and bought a couple of cans there.

Also was told about a couple of trails to try just outside of town, the Mendota

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Mendota2024/index.htm>

And Sugar Hollow Park, which were nice breaks from the road

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/SugarHollow2024/index.htm>

I stayed in Lewisburg WV so visited the Greenbrier Historical Society

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Greenbrier2024/index.htm>

Which was far more interesting than I expected. There I learned about the Greenbrier Resort and Bunker, so I drove over there next.

For a large fancy resort they were very friendly and directed me to parking and let me wander all over the place. There is a former Presidential retreat on site you can visit.

I got my ticket for the tour of the Bunker, but photography was not allowed inside. The Bunker was built as a not hardened retreat for Congress in case of an emergency.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Greenbrier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Greenbrier)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_Greek\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Greek_Island)

And my photos of the resort at:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/GreenbrierResort2024/index.htm>

Finally on to Green Banks. I was kind of nervous about going there since directions weren't very good and it was up in the mountains. Finally made it there after asking directions and visiting a rest stop that was the site of Civil War fortifications and a battle. I didn't like the recommended directions. I've visited other radio telescope sites but this one was the most nutty about electronic interference. You can't take digital cameras or even iTags any closer than the visitor center. I bought a couple of disposable film cameras at a Walmart just to take photos on the tour. This is the site of the biggest steerable antenna in the world. It is no longer funded by the NSF, which probably turned out to be a good thing. Some rich guy is funding it for SETI type work. It is in effect the replacement for Arecibo. After the bus tour I walked the path on foot to get a better view of everything.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/GreenBank2024/index.htm>

I made my return trip to the Tredegar, the largest iron foundry in the Confederacy. I was surprised that a good chunk of it now is private, where the National Park visitor center used to be. The visitor center is now in a smaller structure to the side. The Civil War Museum is still there. I had skipped it on the previous trip so I decided to check it out. A little disappointing compared to say, the one in Harrisburg. However, from the Park Service I did learn about the battlefields ringing the city of Richmond.

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



I also crossed the street and climbed up to the Virginia War Memorial where the docent was very helpful.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/VirginiaWarMemorial2024/index.htm>

I decided to visit the Cold Harbor Battlefield and walk around it after a visit to the visitor center there. The amount of bloodshed at close quarters there is shocking.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/ColdHarbor2024/index.htm>

For a real change of venue I drove to Newport News and the large Mariner's Museum. I visited this museum long ago but it has really grown since then. The centerpiece are their exhibits on the retrieval of parts of the USS Monitor from its watery grave. There are also numerous models and an entire racing yacht hull. Outdoors is a full sized steel model of the USS Monitor built by Northrop Grumman apprentices. Pretty impressive.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Mariners2024/index.htm>

A pleasant surprise was the massive, intact Fort Monroe, the last redoubt of the Union authority in the South. It is big and the museum is very good. While I was there reenactors were making presentations on the field, including music. Eras covered the Civil War to WWII. I also walked around the fort on the seaward side, following the map I received from the visitors center, which is actually outside of the fort. You have to get your tickets there for the museum, which is inside of the fort. Confusing for others besides me.

Fort Monroe and its wartime commander General Benjamin F. Butler had a large impact on emancipation and Civil War.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/FortMonroe2024/index.htm>

Took a long complex drive to the Portsmouth Navy Yard Museum since I had gas containers on my roof rack and that is not allowed on the bridges or in the tunnels. This would cause more problems later. I had arrived at this museum too late to enter on a much earlier motorcycle trip so I wanted to try again. The museum was much smaller than I had anticipated, but still interesting for its historical displays. There is also a complete light ship nearby.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Portsmouth2024/index.htm>

Turning north my next tourist stop was the Udvar-Hazy. I'd been there a couple times before, but it was worthwhile to make another trip since they had put on display more of their World War II trophies and remnants. You can also view the restoration workshop now. Another full day stop.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/UdvarHazy2024/index.htm>

Turning towards Pittsburgh, I got there in time to spend a couple of hours at the Frick Museum, but not enough time to go on a mansion tour. I just barely had time to run through the auto exhibits.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Frick2024/index.htm>

The Carnegie Art Museum the next day was a real treat. Can't believe I skipped it on my previous visit.



<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CarnegieArt2024/index.htm>

And don't forget the Natural History Museum in the same location

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CarnegieScience2024/index.htm>

The Heinz History Center has some remnants of the Westinghouse Museum, but I enjoyed all of it. Didn't have enough time to for everything, but I did see Mr. Rogers.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Heinz2024/index.htm>

The next high point of the trip was visiting the Cleveland Museum of Art to see the Africa and Byzantium exhibit. I had heard of it at the Metropolitan, which is kind of a stretch for me to visit, although I have been there twice (thrice if you count the Cloisters). So when I heard the exhibit was traveling to Cleveland, I knew I had to see it, and I was very happy that I did.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AfricaByzantium2024/index.htm>

Of course, I also toured the rest of the museum:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CMA2024/index.htm>

Swinging back into aviation mode, I visited the Air Force Museum. Spent the whole day there and that wasn't enough.

[http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce1\\_2024/index.htm](http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce1_2024/index.htm)

[http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce2\\_2024/index.htm](http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/AirForce2_2024/index.htm)

Staying in this mode I revisited Carillon Park in Dayton. I got to see outside a baseball game in period clothing. I was too late to get on the tour to the Wright Home, so I drove out there and walked around it. The brewery was still there and I refreshed myself there for lunch. I barely had time to run through the far side of the park where I found a poor lonely school teacher reenactor alone in a schoolhouse. I barely had time to say hello. I'll try to go again and make the tour. I swung by the vacant lot of the Wright home and the closed visitor center. I walked up to the Dunbar House which is closed and saw some Wright memorials along the way. While driving out of town, I saw the life-size sculpture of the Wright first flight. I had to turn around for that.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Carillon2024/index.htm>

I found Mounds State Park in Indiana which has mounds with a very unique shape. Also a unique history since the mounds were preserved under an amusement park for a while.

Also a very unique early settler house.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Mounds2024/index.htm>

After seeing a TV movie long ago about Orphan Trains, I had to make a detour to see the National Orphan Train Complex in Concordia, Kansas. Is that how Dorothy got there?

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/OrphanTrain2024/index.htm>

In the same town I had to visit the Cloud County Historical Museum where I saw a samurai sword that had been used by a Union officer on the battlefield. Did he go with Perry to Japan or did someone bring it back?

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CloudCounty2024/index.htm>

Had to visit Dorothy's House:

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Dorothy2024/index.htm>

In Liberal, Kansas. Maybe not for everyone but I liked it.

In the same town is the un-assuming Mid-America Air Museum. They let me in for free since I had been a pilot! The museum once was a B-24 training and maintenance depot, but no complete B-24s. Next door is a deteriorating World War II hangar. A common billboard advertising Liberals show Dorothy posing with a B-24. Wish I could have gotten a shot of that.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/MidAmerica2024/index.htm>

I was going to stop in Santa Rosa so I visited their Route 66 Museum

[http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Route66\\_2024/index.htm](http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Route66_2024/index.htm)

Unfortunately the motel's credit card machine was busted so I continued on to Albuquerque which turned out to be really fortunate since I was able to walk to a good brewpub.

Had to stop at the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in Albuquerque. It's come a long way since I used to make business trips to the area.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/NuclearMuseum2024/index.htm>

Also visited the Albuquerque Museum which fittingly had exhibits on the effects of nuclear testing on "Downwinders".

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/Albuquerque2024/index.htm>

My last photo stop was hiking the surprisingly pleasant Camp Beale Trail outside of Kingman AZ.

<http://ikemi.info/Graphics2024/CampBeale2024/index.htm>

