

Bandelier, March 18-26, 2006

Saturday March 18th

We left SLUH at about 7:15 AM, 10 students and 3 leaders in the two SLUH vans. Nathan Banet, Mike Baumer, Mike Finocchiaro, Nathaniel Hoglebe, Kevin Kissel, Joe Kuensting, Dan Marincel, Kyle Nesslein, Rick Shipley, Chris Sinks, and Jon Tylka were accompanied by 3 leaders: Mr. Kuensting, Mr. Kissel, and Mr. Shipley. Stopping only for gasoline, air in the van tires, and food, the group drove 600 miles to Elk City, Oklahoma. Rain prevented the group from camping at a KOA and they found reasonable lodging at a Motel 6. A grand supper was had at the local Western Sizzler, where everyone had their last big buffet before their upcoming backpacking trek.

Sunday March 19th

We left the Motel 6 early, rising at dawn to an overcast sky and thick fog. We drove through the fog across western Oklahoma and the panhandle of Texas and the sky began to clear when we reached eastern New Mexico. The terrain began to change from flat landscape to rolling hills and desert flora. We turned north toward Santa Fe and before long, mountains loomed in the distance. We stopped in Santa Fe, had lunch, and drove to Bandelier. Arriving at Bandelier, everyone prepped their packs for 3 days of food while the leaders secured permits that ran from Sunday night through Wednesday afternoon. The loaded up and headed north on the trail from the Visitor's Center, toward the first camping site in zone E, within Frijoles Canyon. After hiking about 2 miles, we found a suitable campsite at dusk, set up camp with headlamps, cooked supper, stood around camp furniture and talked, and finally got into our tents for a night's sleep well before 9:00 pm.

Monday March 20th

It snowed during the night, making was a dusting on all of the tents, trees, and ground. We ate breakfast, and Mr. Kuensting headed back to the vans with his son to get clothing and equipment. The rest of the group prepared to hike north to the upper Frijoles Crossing, and climb out of Frijoles Canyon. When Mr. Kuensting and Joe returned to the first campsite, they were about 30 minutes behind the group. The morning start was more strenuous than expected, and the Kuenstings rejoined the rest of the group above Frijoles Canyon at a rest stop. The wind was blowing and the air was uncomfortably cold. Everyone had snacks and water and tried to keep warm. Packs were reshouldered and the group headed south toward water and warmth in Alamo Canyon. The air gradually warmed as the sun shone. We reloaded with water in Alamo canyon, at a great rest stop on a huge fallen tree. We reshouldered our packs and climbed out of Alamo canyon, to then descend again into Capulin Canyon and find our campsite, after a day's trek of over 8 miles. Finding a campsite just before, we set up camp, filtered water, ate supper, explored a bit, and prepared for sleep. We were all in our sleeping bags well before 9:00 pm.

Tuesday March 21st

We awoke to a clear sky and sunshine. Just after dawn, a few hikers headed up the canyon wall to the sunshine to warm up. When the sunshine reached the campsite, the 3 rejoined the group and had breakfast. Everyone filtered water and prepared to hike. We shouldered our packs and hiked south in the sunshine and warming air. The weather was spectacular. We found an outstanding campsite down-trail of the one we used and noted it for a future campout. We headed further south and found the ranger station. We at snacks, drank water, and enjoyed the library of literature on the outhouse wall. We then shouldered our packs and found the exit trail from

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Capulin Canyon, hiking up and out to an excellent vantage point. The flora had changed from tall pines and grasses to a desert scrub ecology. After dayhiking/climbing nearly to the top of the ridge above, we ate lunch. Everyone walked down to get photos at another nearby vantage point. We then headed north to the Stone Lions site and Yapashi ruins, leaving our packs and dayhiking to explore the local archaeology. We found and photographed pottery shards on the ground at Yapashi. Clouds began to form overhead. We headed back to our packs and, as we readied for the remaining hike, Mike Baumer found an abandoned pack. After taking pictures of the "archaeological find", we reshouldered our packs, and trekked north into and out of Alamo canyon, filtering water in the same spot we had the previous day. We found a campsite in a pine savanna northwest of the Alamo Canyon crossing, with thick clouds forming overhead. Tired after a total trek of about 8 miles, we hurriedly set up camp, ate supper (most of us), and prepared for the night. Just as the last of our group was getting into their sleeping bags, the snow began.

Wednesday March 22nd

We awoke early to a snowscape. It snowed nearly all night and several inches were already on the ground. Knowing that most of us did not have gaiters, we decided to hike down to the ranger station as early as possible. Most of us skipped breakfast, packed up camp, and prepared to hike out. We bushwhacked back to the trail and, after a short rest stop, headed directly for the ranger station. Thankfully, no one slipped on the icy rocks and everyone hiked down safely. After a 5 mile trek, we decided to spend the night at the Juniper campground for the night and have a campfire, something we could not do in the backcountry. Everyone was thankful to have a warm fire and heat source through the evening. Some dayhiked to the canyon rim to see the sunset. We talked around the fire and went to bed later, before 10:00.

Thursday March 23rd

We awoke to a clear sky and sunrise. The fire was restarted and we ate breakfast. The group decided to drop the students off near the Frey Trailhead so they could hike 1.5 miles down to the Tyuonyi ruins, while the leaders drove the vans down to the Visitor's Center to meet the students. The group reunited at the Tyuonyi ruins and explored the entire Native American historical site, including cave dwellings and buildings. The final archaeological site explored was Alcove House, which held a Kiva used for tribal ceremonies. We returned to the Visitor Center (3 miles round trip), ate lunch, visited the Souvenir Shop, and headed south on the trail to the Rio Grande. We stopped and photographed the two waterfalls, the Upper and Lower Frijoles Falls. Further on we found the valley of the Rio, and some students stepped into the water. We returned up the trail to the Visitor Center (4 mile round trip) and headed back to camp, to start another fire and enjoy another camp supper. We again got into our sleeping bags before 10:00 pm.

Friday March 24th

We awoke early, ate breakfast and prepared to break camp. We packed up our tents and gear, to leave Bandelier and head to Tent Rocks National Monument. We first stopped at the Souvenir Shop, purchased items for family at home, and then drove south to Tent Rocks. Tent Rocks was geographically located about 10 miles south of Bandelier but could only be reached by driving around the Rio Grande valley, a total drive of 30 or more miles. We arrived at Tent Rocks in late morning/early afternoon and dayhiked up a spectacular slot canyon. The trail rose out

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of the canyon and ended atop the ridge, with high wind and clear skies. We hiked back down and around the cave loop. After a 4 mile total trek, we boarded the vans and drove southeast toward Tucumcari, finding the KOA there and a campsite after dark. We ate supper on a picnic table and set up tents for the night. We got to bed as early as possible for the next day's drive.

Saturday March 25th

We awoke at dawn, ate breakfast, broke camp, and drove east toward Oklahoma. Stopping only for gasoline, food, and rest breaks, Mr. Kuensting decided to try and check out Red Rock Canyon State Park in Oklahoma. Finding a disappointing canyon scape (maybe we were spoiled by the scenery in New Mexico), we drove onward to Joplin, Missouri, to another KOA. We were given permission to sleep in the Activity Center in case of rain. We spent the night indoors after eating supper, getting to bed between 10:00 and 11:00.

Sunday March 26th

We awoke early, repacked and loaded our equipment, to go to the Iron Skillet for breakfast. We ate our last meal together at the breakfast buffet, having omelets, eggs, and bacon. We then drove toward St. Louis, stopping in St. Clair to clean and wash the vans. We then drove on to St. Louis, arriving back at SLUH before 3:00 pm.

Total Mileage backpacked: 23.5 (2.2+8.5+7.9+5.1)

Total Mileage dayhiked: 12.5 (8.6+4)

Total Mileage walked: 36 miles!!