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Subject: Postcard

Albuquerque is a big, flat pancake of a city. But at night from the seventh floor of the Sandia Resort and Casino it makes a tolerable picture.

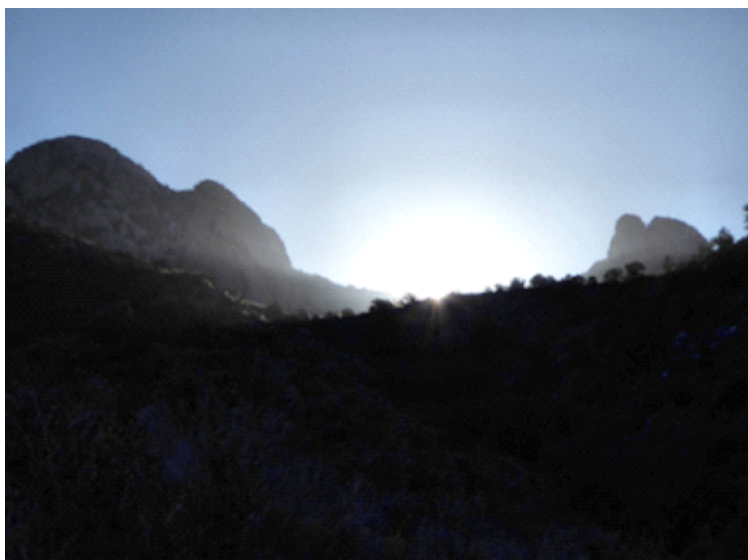


Were you to turn 180° from Albuquerque you would be facing an empty plain that is part pueblo and part national forest, and behind those, the Sandia Mountains. Today we took a walk partway up the Sandias on La Luz trail.



As was explained to us by a coworker of yesterday's geriatric, deaf, lame, palsied, obese substitute for a forest ranger – and echoed by our bellman – "La Luz is a summer trail. Turn around where it gets icy". Sounded good.

Our hike started in the western shadows of the mountains when it was about 30°. As the sun rose we went in and out of the sunshine and the temperature began to climb. We finished at 50° in full sun, carrying most of what we wore at the start.





At about 2.5 miles and 1200' of ascent the trail was indeed covered by a thick, slanting layer of ice. We were ready to go back anyway. Sitting in front of video buffaloes is poor preparation for hiking. Or for anything, actually.



We had encountered no one on our way up. On the way down we passed a bunch of folks.

We stood aside for a runner dressed in green and wearing an Oregon cap. Possibly the second coming of Steve Prefontaine.

A tall, unbecoming, angular woman led a party of three up the slope, wearing binoculars around her neck and looking for birds. She decided we were birders too and told us where to join a nature walk. We nodded and smiled. Could have been the second coming of Miss Hathaway*.

Another guy we heard coming a mile away. He was conducting a relentless monologue to a tattooed woman

and a Pitbull. When they got to us we stepped off the trail to let the uphill hikers pass. We would have stepped off the trail no matter which way they were going. The guy was yakking and as they passed he never missed a beat incongruously saying "Thank you ma'am. Sir." The three of them curled above us on a switchback so we could still hear him clearly. He said: "I haven't decided but I think I'm going back into rehab..." and then blah blah 'til he faded out. We hope he wasn't the second coming of anyone.



We ate lunch at a round table that had a tree growing through it. We scared off a mooching coyote. Sure it was weird but so's this trip.

Statistics

La Luz Trail

Décor –10/5 – wide open spaces

Smoke – 10/5 – nearly perfect

Hospitality – 10/5 – even the meth head was friendly

Time – 194 minutes

Winnings – incalculable

D&S

*Miss Hathaway was Mr. Drysdale's assistant. And Mr. Drysdale was Jed Clampett's banker. And Jed Clampett was a Beverly Hillbilly. Ah, it all comes back, no?

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