

Trip Report

Three Amigos - Utah National Parks & Balloon Ride

The 3 Amigos are Paul Singelyn, Ben Whitehouse, and Jay Vaughn. We got our start 63 year ago as Plebe Year roommates in Company E-1. Over the years, we have traveled through Europe on less than \$5/day, climbed Mount Hood, visited numerous Civil War and Revolutionary War battlefields, rafted the Arkansas River in Colorado, zip-lined over a portion of the Grand Canyon, "glamped" in Eastern Tennessee, and generally made nuisances of ourselves wherever we have gone.

This year's adventure was to visit five national parks in Southern Utah and ride in a hot-air balloon. Here's how it went ...

Day One - Ben and Paul flew into Sky Harbor airport in Phoenix, were met by Jay and traveled to Flagstaff for the night at the Luke AFB facility of Fort Tuthill. Supper was at Black Bart's Steak House which included singing by the waiters and waitresses, students in the NAU music department.

Day Two - Drove to Zion NP with a stop at the Glen Canyon Dam. As impressive as Zion is to be at the bottom of that deep canyon, it felt a bit like Disneyland to be herded onto buses. Still, it was spectacular.

Day Three - Visited Bryce Canyon NP. Awesome views of the HooDoos, arches and other rock formations from the drive and viewpoints along the rim.

Day Four - Visited Capitol Reef NP after a stay in Torrey, UT. The cabin we rented had been the town post office. Our hostess was Diane Torrey. She was part of the fifth generation of the Torrey family to live in their namesake town.

Day Five - Traveled on to Moab, UT where we rented an AirBnB for three nights. We were joined in Moab by Amy Floyd and her dog, Miles. Amy is Jay's granddaughter. While in Moab, we visited Arches NP and Canyonlands NP. By this time we had reached sensory overload and one pile of rocks was beginning to look like all the others. This was not true of the amazing arch formations in Arches not the overlooks from the SkyIsland portion of Canyonlands NP.

Day Six - Hot-air balloon ride. We were up at the crack of dawn to meet the crew and be ferried by 4WHD vans to the launch site. Winds were a bit high and shifting which made inflating the balloon a big challenge. Our pilot was highly experienced with over 4000 balloon flights in the Moab area. He persevered and they finally got the balloon inflated. We all piled in for a 15+ mile ride over some of the most amazing scenery in the world. The landing was rough due to the winds. After the initial bounce, we landed a second time about 20 feet away and then the basket tipped over and we were drug by the balloon another fifty yards. When we finally stopped and piled out of the basket, we celebrated in traditional ballooning fashion with champagne.

Day Seven - Through Monument Valley and back to Flagstaff for the night and then on to Phoenix and flights home to Nashville for Paul and Raleigh for Ben.

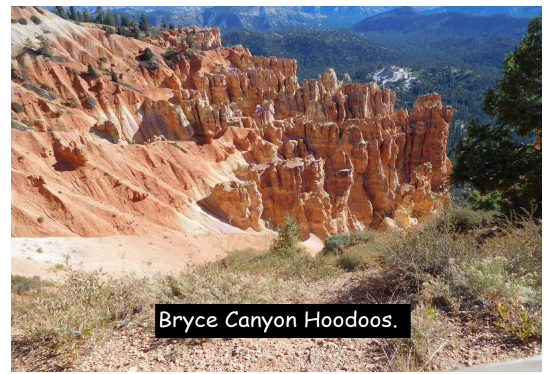
We all highly recommend this adventure. If you don't have time to do it all, focus on Moab and the national parks close by. Pictures of this incredible Amigo adventure are below:



Paul Singelyn, Ben Whitehouse & Jay Vaughn -- The Three Amigos



Paul and Ben in Zion NP. Impressive being at the bottom of the Canyon but too many people!! Felt like Disneyland.



Bryce Canyon Hoodoos.



Amigos in Capitol Reef NP - Uniform of this day was T-Shirt from earlier Colorado river rafting trip. "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?"



Mesa Arch in Canyonlands NP. Probably the most spectacular scene of all.



Dawn Balloon Ride near Moab, UT. Balloon inflated and Paul charging forth to board.



Ben at Arches NP. Able to balance a large rock on his head



Airborne at last



One proud grandpa - Amy Floyd and Jay



View from the balloon.



Heros/Survivors: Jay Vaughn, Amy Floyd (Jay's granddaughter), Ben Whitehouse, and Paul Singelyn