

Mount Sunflower, KS, 4,039 ft. – December 23, 2019, HP #30: The Owner Arrived

Kansas is known for being flat and having tornados. To be fair, Kansas is not really as flat as it gets credit for. On a list of the flattest to the steepest US states, Kansas actually ranks seventh. According to the Geographical Review, flatter in descending order are Delaware, Minnesota, Louisiana, North Dakota, Illinois, and Florida.

Two-thirds of Kansas is actually hilly, with the remaining third, the High Plains, being sincerely flat. Kansas can even brag about its unspoiled Flint Hills along with the rolling Smoky Hills, Chautauqua Hills, and the Red Hills.

It is true though, as The Wizard of Oz made Kansas known for, that it experiences an abundance of tornados each year. In fact, it ranks second among the US States having on average 96 tornados per year.

When it comes to state highpoints Kansas more than holds its own - coming in almost in the middle at 28 of 50. In other word, 22 states are lower.

Following our morning visit to the Royal Gorge Bridge outside of Canon CO, Ana and I drove another 212 miles to the highest point in Kansas. Mount Sunflower is located within a half mile of the Colorado and Kansas border and about 22 miles from I-70. From close or from far, if it wasn't marked views of it would be practically indistinguishable from the surrounding barren terrain. Mount Sunflower is a "mountain" only by name. We arrived around 2:00 p.m. with December temperatures in the mid-sixties.

The area is ranching and farming land. Nothing was growing this time of the year so I cannot say from my own experience what crops favor this region. In general, Kansas is known for wheat and even boasts having produced enough wheat in one season to make over 32 billion loaves of bread!



At the highpoint we discovered a sort of art shrine presumably created by the private owner of the land. Within the fenced off shrine, the main attraction was an east facing gate which is labeled across its top with the words "Mount Sunflower." Across the gates face, a sunflower made of metal is attached diagonally - a reminder of the wild sunflowers that grow in abundance across the state giving the state its nickname. In the lower right-hand corner, a metal rectangle with the words "Highest Point in Kansas" cut out. In the upper left-hand corner, the number 4039 for the elevation of the highpoint. Behind the

gate, a large rock, along with another, taller, metal sunflower welded out of railroad spikes. To the left of the gate, a U.S Mailbox labeled "Mount Sunflower Registration."

We opened the mailbox to find a variety of papers and pamphlets, along with a pink polka-dotted registry book which we signed. To the collection I added the paper Mount Sunflower sign I had made.

In the southwest corner of the shrine stood a dead tree trunk cut off about 10 feet tall. Attached to it were signs pointing to various places such as Stockholm Sweden and Weskan Kansas. Sporting a Santa Claus cap, I climbed the dead tree trunk to pose for a photograph.

South of the shrine, a covered picnic table which included a little library. We took advantage of the picnic area making ourselves a second lunch.

As we were readying to leave Ed Harold, the owner of Mount Sunflower, arrived. He was sociable and we enjoyed the privilege of chatting with him for a short time. He drove a two door Jeep, and I could further tell by the sticker on his Jeep door he does not lack a sense of humor. The sticker read "Kansas Mountain Rescue" and contained an outline of a mountain with a first aid cross inside it.

Indeed, the personality of the owner, which was both appealing and amusing, revealed itself wholeheartedly through the highpoint.

Photo Album: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Q3LVpNN5FkDAhrQ57>