Nov 18 – Ana and I drove down to Moab, had lunch, then drove up the Potash Road to the White Rim Trail. We got as far as Musselman Arch when I decided we should get a permit and not risk getting in trouble. So we turned around went up the Shafer switchbacks and got to the Island in the Sky visitor center at 3:55 pm (five mins before closing), and got a free permit (but had to pay $25 for the park entrance fee).

Next we drove down Gemini Bridges trail and over to the Chevron where 191 and 313 highways intersect. Next we drove 12.6 miles up 313 to the Horse Thief trail (aka Mineral Bottom road) and down that 14.5 miles down that road, and 4 miles to the Canyonlands Park Boundary where we camped on the public land side of the line. It was a cold night.

Nov 19, up at 6:00 am and on the road at 6:30 am. Temperature from the truck read 16 F. White Rim trail parallels the Green River, right on its edge and has parts so narrow that you cannot pull over, pass or turnaround (and backing up on it would be agonizing). Shortly the trail enters a meadow like area where the Hardscrabble campground is, and soon heads up the most challenging section of the trail Hardscrabble Hill. My goal was to drive the whole White Rim trail in 2-wheel drive but had to go into four low to get over one obstacle ascending Hardscrabble hill. We topped out on Hardscrabble at 7:06 am. Similar to the climb, the descent took about 30 mins as well putting as a Potato Bottom around 7:45 am.

At 8:15ish am, just before Candlestick campground we stopped and made breakfast which took 45-50 mins. Glad we stopped where we did as Candlestick campground had a large group of bikers at it. At 10:00am we took a photo on the edge a few miles past Candlestick campground. Next obstacle was Murphy Hogback, which had a really cool descent. I used 4X4 low on the descent just to slow the truck down. If I went back again, I’d drive from Mineral Bottom up and over the Hogback then turn around and go back out. Including our breakfast time, it took about 4 hours from the Park Boundary to the top of Murphy Hogback and perhaps 30 mins to descend it.

From the park boundary to the bottom of the Shafer switchbacks (where the Potash road T's in is 68.7 miles, and to the top of the switchbacks where the dirt road meets highway 313 is 74.1 miles). It took us 8 hours to reach the T with Potash, and 8.5 hours to highway 313 at the top of the Shafer switchbacks (74.1/8.5 = 8.72 miles per hour on average including breaks). They claim the White Rim trail is 100 miles long, but to get that one must count the 5.4 miles of the Shafer switchbacks, 7.4 miles of highway 313, 14.5 miles of the Mineral Bottom road, and the 4 miles from Mineral Bottom to the Park boundary. The Park Rangers told me the Shafer switchbacks aren't technically part of the White Rim trail.

Interesting fact, the road was constructed in the 1950s by the Atomic Energy Commission to provide access for individual prospector’s intent on mining uranium deposits for use in nuclear weapons production during the Cold War. Large deposits had been found in similar areas within the region; however, the mines along the White Rim Road produced very little uranium and all the mines were abandoned.

Image Zero is a map.

1. Mineral Bottom Switchbacks (photo found on-line). We drove down this in the dark, Nov 18.
2. The narrow sections, along the Green River, just after entering the National Park. Photo found on-line. We drove the other direction at about the break of day so the light wasn’t bright enough for us to take photos.
3. See 3
4. 7:06 am, Nov 19, 2017, at the top of Hardscrabble hill on the White Rim trail. Getting to this point was the most challenging section of the trial. Really the only point where 4X4 was needed.
5. Green River
6. Ditto
7. Green River, etc.
8. 7:22 am on the descent of Hardscrabble.
9. 7:25 am on the descent of Hardscrabble get back down to the Green River.
10. This photo was taken on the south ride of Hard Scrabble hill, at mile point 7.5, one hour into our drive. In other words, this is the last bit of Hard Scrabble hill after one has crossed the hill going south toward Potato Bottom
11. Ditto
12. 10:00 am, Nov 19, 2017. Just after Candle Stick Campground and about 25 mins before Murphy Hogback.
13. Ascending Murphy Hogback. 10:25 am.
14. Notice the cantilever.
15. Ditto
16. Same location as previous photo just looking North (NW), instead of South (as the shadow indicates). Candlestick Tower is at top right (5865 ft.). If you study the photo you can see the cliff near Candlestick campground where we took an earlier photo (sort of right side middle, in line (top to bottom) with Candlestick Tower).
17. Some Hoodoos, after the Hogback at 11:23 am. White Rim Trail
18. The scenery just kept on giving!
19. Ditto
20. Ditto
21. Mussel Man Arch about 3.5 miles before the T with Potash Road. On-line photo.
22. The Shafer switchbacks. On-line photo. From the park boundary to the bottom of the Shafer switchbacks (where the Potash road T's in is 68.7 miles, and to the top of the switchbacks where the dirt road meets highway 313 is 74.1 miles). It took us 8 hours to reach the T with Potash, and 8.5 hours to highway 313 at the top of the Shafer switchbacks (74.1/8.5 = 8.72 miles per hour on average including breaks).
23. Pink dots are approximate location of photos 4, 11, 12, and 14.