

BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK (SOUTH RIM)

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison is a spectacular canyon gorge located in Colorado. We only went to some of the overlooks on the South Rim, as we did not have much time to spend in the park. Gunnison Point, the first viewpoint we stopped at, is located near the South Rim Visitor's Center. The Cross Fissures viewpoint seemed to me to be the most spectacular in regards to rock formations, while Chasm View gave a great view of the Gunnison River below, and the Painted Wall viewpoint showed the striped-looking rock on the fairly sheer canyon walls near there. Warner Point gives a very nice view of the upper end of the canyon and the surrounding regions, and shows how the canyon cuts through a hilly region with plains areas just to the west and mountains just to the east.

The Gunnison Point viewpoint is located by the Black Canyon of the Gunnison Visitors Center, and it is a great place to get an overview of the canyon and the rock formations:



Panorama from one of the overlooks on Gunnison Point:



Looking down into canyon from here; note that we can just barely see the Gunnison River below:



Another panorama, this one from the main Gunnison Point Viewpoint (there is a short nature trail near here which gives more great views of the canyon, but we didn't have time to hike it as we still had a long drive to do this day):



The trail sign to the Cross Fissures viewpoint; I'm guessing the distance was measured with some sort of rolling distance-measuring device:



There were hundreds of cicadas in this area of the park when we were visiting, and surprisingly many were visible from the trail:



Looking down the canyon from the first Cross Fissures viewpoint:



It's a long way down to the bottom:



This viewpoint is located right on the edge of the canyon, with a sheer drop to the canyon floor, though luckily there is a good railing:



Although not marked on the park map, there is a loop trail which leads to the second viewpoint (so hikers don't have to retrace their steps); this part of the trail gives what I thought were better views of the canyon than are obtained from the viewpoints:



Panorama from the second viewpoint:



At Chasm View, one can get incredible views of the Gunnison River far below:



It seems hard to believe that many years ago explorers visited this canyon by boat:



The sun angle wasn't ideal for photography of the canyon, but I was able to get some photos which showed the interesting kinds of rock which make up the canyon walls:



Another view looking down into the canyon:



I was surprised to see a benchmark at Chasm View:



There were a variety wildflowers scattered throughout the park, this one located near the parking area for the Painted Wall viewpoint:



This view looking up-canyon, towards Warner Point, is on the way to the Painted Wall viewpoint:



The painted wall looks different than one might imagine just based on the name:



But the wall certainly is quite spectacular:



Panorama of just the painted wall; note how sheer the cliffs are on the other side of the canyon:



Continuing up the main park road, I noticed an overhanging ledge on the other side of the canyon:



Our final stop in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park was Warner Point; this is the view looking to the west, back over towards Ouray:



Looking over at the canyon, with some tall, snowy peaks in the background:



There are three routes into the canyon from the south rim, all of them very difficult with steep, slippery inclines, not much of a trail, and huge poison ivy plants:



Looking up-canyon from this part of the trail; note that the canyon is no longer steep-walled above Warner Point:



At Warner Point, there was a rocky outcropping that one could climb on to get a better view of the canyon, but the rock looked unstable and it was a sheer drop down, so we didn't consider it safe to climb out on:



Panorama of the Gunnison Canyon from Warner Point (the canyon doesn't bend this sharply; this is about a 270 degree panorama):



I found it interesting how this canyon cuts so sharply through the hills surrounding it; driving up to the rim one wouldn't expect to encounter such a deep canyon:



Informative signs back at the parking area for the Warner Point trail, which describe some of the plants seen along the trail:



One last view in the Gunnison Canyon area, looking up-canyon with some nice yellow flowers in the foreground:



From here, we drove to Breckenridge (as a stopping point on the way to Rocky Mountain National Park); there were lots of snow covered peaks in this area:

