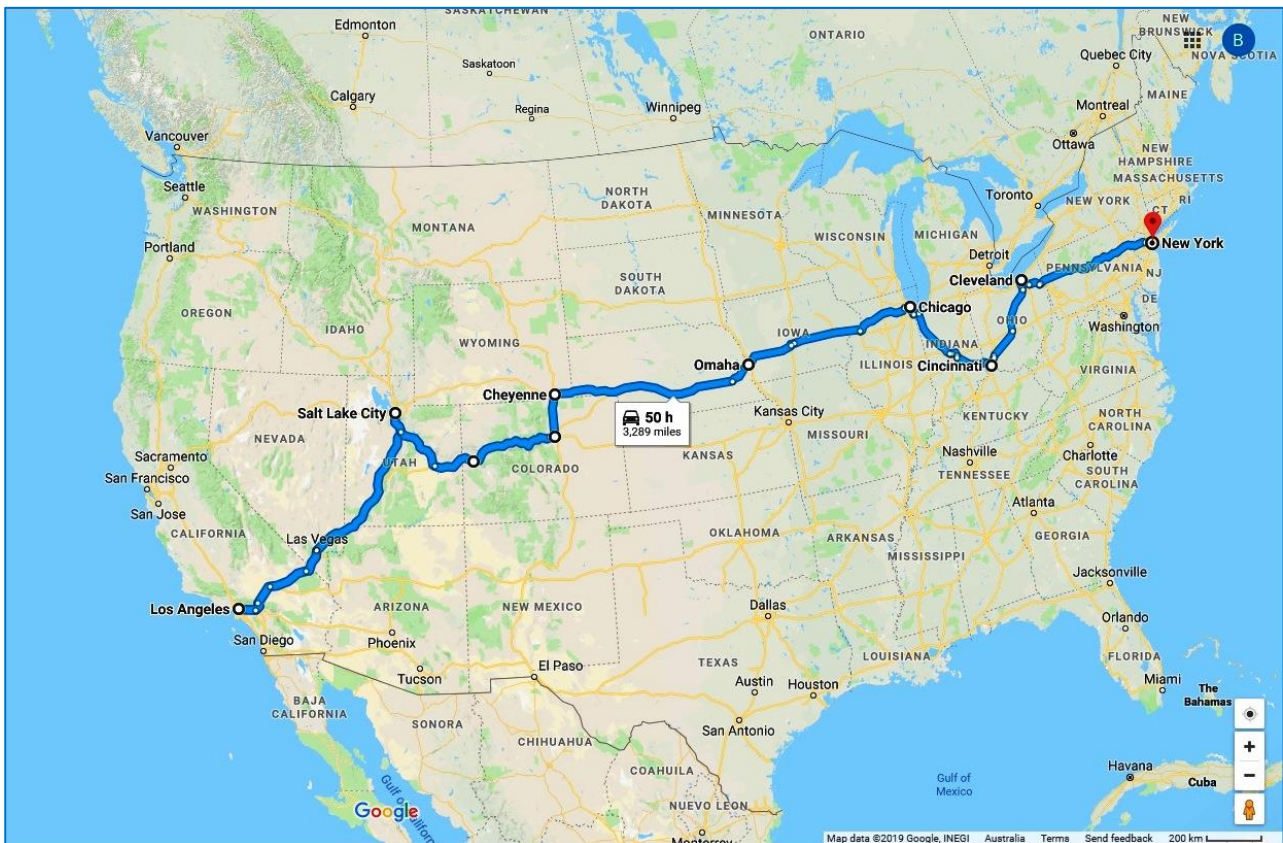


# Across the USA by road – November 2018

Andrew Newman

As a follow-up to my previous article on our road trips around North America over many years, I'd like to take you through our most recent trip and the wonderful places we visited. As mentioned in my previous article, if you'd like more information on anything here in this article, please contact me. I'd be only too pleased to help.



*Los Angeles to New York – only 3,289 miles and 50 hours non-stop driving by road (Courtesy Google Maps)*

## Los Angeles, California

In early November 2018 we flew into LA and stopped over before flying out to Salt Lake City. The fires that ravaged LA were very obvious from the ground but massive from the air. In LA I finally got to visit the Nethercutt Car Museum, one of the best I have ever been to.

## Salt Lake City, Utah

Salt Lake City was clear and crisp, and as home to the Mormon religion had some stunning architecture and church-related structures. The Capitol was outstanding and worth a visit, as was the lake itself and Antelope Island. We both purchased a sim card for our phones with an American number so we could use data and send messages. Well worth the US\$50 each for unlimited calls in the US and limitless data.



*Utah's Capitol Building*

We went to Park City, a ski resort just out of Salt Lake City, and it had snowed during the night. Roads were mostly clear and the scenery was outstanding. We had lunch in an Irish Pub and took the free trolley ride around Park City. You can only buy alcohol in state run outlets in Utah as it is tightly regulated. You can however buy beer at the supermarket.

### Utah's national parks

We came to Salt Lake City and Utah to see the National Parks, especially Arches and Canyonlands. Getting closer to Moab it becomes more rugged but very barren. The altitude is much higher and just as you come into Moab you cross the Colorado River. The days were superb, cloudless and cool and the nights around freezing with snow-capped mountains in the distance. The tourist season is over and you are not battling any crowds at the beginning of November.

The National Parks did not disappoint. **Canyonlands** is massive and you look down on what the rivers (including the Colorado) have done to the landscape over thousands of years. It is truly massive and awe inspiring.

**Arches** is equally awesome. In Arches you do the opposite of Canyonlands and look up. There were some spectacular photo opportunities and with the fabulous weather it made for ideal conditions. We actually rated these two parks as better than Monument Valley.

### Colorado

When we left Moab heading east, we followed the Colorado River all the way to **Grand Junction**. The roads were excellent and finally we joined the interstate just before Grand Junction. You are gradually climbing all the way. In Grand Junction we had a great time wandering around and talking to locals as well as having a look at '**Big Boy**', the largest railway steam engine in the world. Twenty five of these huge engines were built and they hauled the trains across the Rockies. They had eight drive wheels and carried 25 tons of water.



*The Union Pacific 'BIG BOY' locomotive – 8 driving wheels*

We continued to head east into **Denver**, the 'mile high city', before heading north to Cheyenne where we then turned east again. Crossing the Rockies before Denver was again spectacular with snow covered mountains all around and Pikes Peak glistening in the distance. We followed the Colorado for a while and then the road headed into the mountains following another tributary. On one side was the railroad and the interstate on the other bank. As there was limited space to build a four lane interstate, they simply double-decked the road. We went through a pass at 10,600 feet and watched as skiers were using the runs at Vail, Beaver Creek and many more resorts. The snow was all around and made for a beautiful scene as the sky was cloudless.

**Cheyenne** was an interesting place to stop with a great railway history as well as its Wild West influence. It was great to walk the streets and feel completely safe as we enjoyed the atmosphere of the west.

### Nebraska

Heading further east we found generally undulating country that was great agricultural land but the view belied the fact that we were between 5,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level and only gradually declining.

**Grand Island** Nebraska was another friendly western town, followed by **Lincoln** Nebraska.



**Omaha** was our last stop in Nebraska before heading into Iowa and it was here that we swapped our rental car for one with winter tyres for safety. There is an outstanding museum here in the former very grand railway station. To say it was outstanding is an understatement of how impressive and comprehensive it is. The local tourist information was superb and so friendly it would make a great role model. Always head for tourist information in these places to get the best advice.

### **Iowa – Illinois – Indiana – Ohio**

We then headed for Cedar Rapids, Iowa and then on to **Chicago**. Chicago is however the world 'capital' of



*Roebling's bridge over the Ohio River - pre Brooklyn Bridge*

toll roads. We headed for Indianapolis (and of course the race track) before heading for **Cincinnati** to have Thanksgiving. Deirdre had booked us into the most impressive Cincinnati Hilton for a Thanksgiving lunch. This is a 1930s hotel that has hosted presidents and even Winston Churchill. We had an outstanding Thanksgiving lunch. Stunning. The hotel is outstanding and so well preserved. We loved the city as well, walking over the Robeling Bridge on the Ohio River which was Robeling's pre-runner for the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, one of the ABC's seven wonders of the modern world.

From Cincinnati we continued east to Columbus and then **Cleveland** on the Great Lakes again. An industrial city, some of you may remember the story of the river catching fire due to the amount of pollutants that were discharged into it years ago.

It is now a regenerated city bustling with growth and investment. We did a walking tour here which was outstanding. (We love walking tours and have done them all around the world. You tip at the end if you think it was worthwhile. We have not done one anywhere that was not great. Sandermans is one company that does them. ) They took us through the Theatre District that is second only in the US to Broadway in NY. The theatres were superb and dressed up for Christmas.



*One of many spectacular theatres in Cleveland*

### **New Jersey – New York**

We then headed east to New Jersey and Newark for a few days. The weather was wet to begin with but ok for driving. We checked in at our hotel and then headed out for dinner and a walk at a nearby massive shopping centre and outlet mall. It was super modern and next to NJ Liberty Airport but very quiet and it was only a few weeks to Christmas. One shop assistant told us there had been a shooting there a couple of days before and that had impacted the shoppers!! We didn't get shot and dinner was great.

We were three stops by train to Penn Station in **Manhattan** so spent a few days in the city. I don't need to expand on NY as a venue. Always stunning but we did do a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. Best from Brooklyn to Manhattan as the view is stunning. Roebling was a brilliant bridge builder.

After this we headed across Manhattan to **Long Island** to check in with Deirdre's family. Ten dollars plus for the George Washington Bridge, but more for the Throgs Neck Bridge which didn't accept cash and informed you they would send you a bill with penalties. By the time it arrived here in January it was US\$32. Makes Sydney's tolls seem minuscule.

After time with Deirdre's mum, brother and his family we headed for San Diego from Islip airport – much nicer than JFK or La Guardia.

### San Diego

We spent time in San Diego retracing steps from 20 years ago and visiting local attractions. Very worthwhile for a visit and the weather is usually great. We headed north and struck some amazing weather for California – torrential rain, mudslides and downpours. The sideline to this was that it cleared the smog and we had the best views of the mountains ever in LA. We could see the snow-capped mountains to the east of LA for the first time ever.

A visit to the Griffith Observatory was stellar as it was so clear.



*LA downtown on a clear day from the Griffith observatory*

### Driving in the USA

So what's the driving like, given that we travelled several thousand miles? Well the speed limits vary from state to state, but generally they are 65 or 70mph, with some 75mph. That generally means 80-85mph with some cars passing us at an estimated 100mph. The roads are brilliant compared to Australia and the police and State Troopers generally show some leniency. (I got booked only once years ago in Montana for 96mph in a 65 zone. Long story but I was given a \$116 fine – and had I thrown the ticket out the window the littering fine was \$1,000.)

Driving on the wrong side of the road is easily undertaken unless you are tired. Don't be afraid.

It's a great place to travel in spite of Donald Trump. If I can be of assistance please contact me.

### Contributor details

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Andrew was Principal of Tumby Umbi High School from 1996-2001. From 2002 to 2015 he was College Principal at Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College. He is a life member of the SPC and since retiring in 2015 has been travelling extensively both within Australia by caravan and overseas.