

Ghost Town

Gold Point, Nevada, U.S.

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September 30, 2017 by [Scott Gilbertson](#)

We were a wreck by the time we reached Las Vegas. And not in a good Hunter S. Thompson sort of way.

We'd somehow become a bus full of snot, Olivia and I being the primary sources, but Lilah and Elliott were contributing as well. At one point I don't think we went more than five minutes without a sneeze. Except for Corrinne who somehow managed to avoid the head cold we all acquired, I think, on the trams of Zion. Our immune systems have been isolated for quite a while, going from that to international public transportation did not work out well.

In the end we went right through Vegas, spending one night in the city to say goodbye to Corrinne's parents before moving on to Red Rock Canyon where we stopped to contemplate our next move and maybe try to drain our noses. We had talked about heading out to Death Valley, but temperatures there were in the triple digits and neither of us were that moved by Death Valley in the first place. Instead, for the first time in a long time, we decided to just drift for a while. North was about the most detailed plan we could commit to.



image by Corrinne Gilbertson

We took 95 north, out of Las Vegas and up through the Great Basin Desert. While we did not have any

specific destination in mind, we did have some things we wanted to do in the desert. Like spend a night in a ghost town. Back at Valley Fire the ranger had given me a little map of Nevada and a couple brochures about stuff to do. Several things jumped out at us, like the [creepy clown motel](#) located right next to a graveyard in Tonopah, NV. Fun for the whole family. But the thing that really stuck with us, especially my wife, was the idea of camping in an abandoned town.

We hit the road on a Tuesday, not too early, not too late, heads still stuffed full of snot, pushing our way through a howling head wind, with no particular destination in mind other than North.

The Great Basin is an empty, desolate place just north of Vegas. I was driving through a fog of a cold and boredom and honestly I spent a good portion of the drive dreaming of trading the bus for the sunny beaches of Thailand. Or Mexico. Or really anywhere my head wasn't full of snot. Corrinne on the other hand was researching ghost towns via the occasional pockets of 4G connection we'd pass through. One of the other things I noticed in the Nevada promotion brochure was that the Nevada State promo app for your phone works offline — this is telling you something about the area it covers. The Great Basic Desert is big and wild and empty, so empty telecom companies can't be bothered to build towers.

It's my kind of place really.



Somewhere on the drive Corrinne started talking about some place called Gold Point, which was a ghost town but somehow also had a campground. Ordinarily we're fine dry camping, boondocking, whatever you want to call it, but we had not filled our water tank in nearly a week so the campground part was compelling. The drive in was compelling too, the roads kept getting narrower and rougher, always a

good sign, and they appeared to lead off into nothing but sagebrush and rabbit bush as far as the eye could see. And around here it can see quite a ways. But then you climb a little rise and next thing you know you're in the middle of the ramshackle, broken down, mostly abandoned town of Gold Point, Nevada.

While not actually a ghost town in the traditional sense of the word — a dozen or so people do live somewhere around here — it's sufficiently abandoned to make you feel like you're in the ruins of the past century. We parked the bus amidst a wreckage of old cars and old fire engines (a couple of which were working and really used for fire fighting).



For once the bus pretty much fit right in.



Probably the best part of Gold Point is that it's not "protected" so the kids could climb on things, explore and pick up stuff without fear of someone telling them to stop. That said, it was slightly confusing at times which building were occupied and which were abandoned. We saw some clueless people abuse the hospitality of the residents to the point that it would not surprise me to find quite a few more restriction a few years from now. For now though we had the run of the place.

We spent the afternoon wandering the abandoned streets, exploring the riding bikes and generally enjoying the absolute silence of the desert.

Gold Point has been through quite a few boom and bust cycles, since it was first settled in the 1880s. The initial round only last a couple years and it was abandoned for the better part of a decade. Then in 1908 there was a second round that saw it grow to house some 800 residents, which necessitated 11 saloons. but only lasted two years after which the silver was gone, or rather there wasn't enough left to sustain 11 saloons. There was a third round in the 1930s that lasted a bit longer and even saw the Post Office show up. That lasted until 1968 after which the town was more or less abandoned for good until stabilization and restoration began in the 1980s.





The result is a mishmash of artifacts spanning decades, building styles and what I would call differing views on just how permanent various structures were intended to be. We found glass in varying degrees of purple, most clearly from the more recent 1930s settlement, but a few pieces that were deep enough purple to probably date from the original 1880s settlement (for a while glass was made with manganese which causes the glass to turn a lavender color when exposed sunlight.) We also found quite a few bits of rock with various fossils in them.



The kids have a book called Stella's Starliner which has a trailer that looks a lot like this one.



