

CONFLUENCE DOME & GARDENS

Project Statement

We went to Confluence Dome & Gardens early yesterday and grabbed coffee and fresh breakfast sandwiches from the café. The gift shop was just opening as we set out along the promenade. We walked as the sun came up, passing a playground, Five Skaters commemoration, the flower garden and amphitheater before reaching the pond, where we ate breakfast.

By midday it was a bustling landscape; on The Lawn kids played while on The Hill people were picnicking as what appeared to be a second date turned into a first kiss in the pink marble-clad Belvedere. After yoga near the sculpture garden we ate lunch in the Eucalyptus grove, where we also took a nap. I remember waking up to Confluence Dome beautifully shimmering in the afternoon sun as it radiated colors—blues, purples, pinks, reds and speckles of green.

We returned to The Under Dome to use the public restrooms and visit the museum, which displayed so much interesting stuff about Confluence Dome, the history of the site, and even the history of domes in general. Did you know that domes originated as prehistoric structures built by someone in a seated position stacking up twigs around them, creating a hemisphere equal to their arms reach? Or that domes evolved into global symbols of innovation by merging art, architecture, technology, and engineering, which is part of why they are so iconic, communal, and memorable? We learned Confluence Dome is a new type of dome; a four-level, open air, eight-lobed—or *octofoil*—dome with eight structural cores supporting an open interior volume and a cantilevered perimeter shell made from pre-fabricated, lightweight, high-strength fiber reinforced polymer with integrated ceramic-glazed shingles, solar energy collecting film, patinated copper, and lichen!

After a matinee play in the amphitheater we excitedly took elevators from the Under Dome 100-feet up to The Procession ramp. The final ascent to The Sky View unfurls along a shallow-sloping, helical ramp curling through the dome's shell! Ascending the ramp, four portals give look-outs over the landscape below, and when arriving on the Sky View level 126-feet above ground, we were immersed in panoramic sunset views and a 47-foot wide oculus!

Though large and open enough for physical distancing if needed, we were most struck by how Confluence Dome & Gardens fostered a sense of community and meaningful social experiences. It was a perfect start to our U.S.A. vacation!

More from America soon!