

June 16, 2010 - Corn Palace - Mitchell, SD

You start seeing signs promoting the Mitchell, SD [Corn Palace](#) while you are still on I-90, in Iowa. I remember my fiancée telling me that this was one of the attractions that her parents took her to when she was a teenager living in George, Iowa, and that I should make the time to see it. Well, Mitchell is located an even 300 miles East of my base of Custer, via that same I-90, and takes just about 3 hours to travel between those two points via my Highlander airplane.

Actually this is the 3rd Corn Palace located in that town. The first was built way back in 1892, mainly as a tourist attraction to bring adjacent town's farmers into Mitchell. Well, it worked and soon the original building's capacity could not keep up with visitors. A rebuild was done in 1900 and an even larger building was relocated to another part of town in 1921. Moorish domes and minarets were added in 1937.

The entire building's mosaic design's are updated each year. A theme is decided on (this year it was transportation), and artists begin designing each of the half dozen or so mosaic artwork panels that adorn the exterior facade. The designs are transferred to the exterior walls in a "paint by number" format. A total of 12 different corn colors are used to create these pictures, and these are placed on the panels to correspond with the color numbers drawn on the wall panels. Various corn fields are planted with the corresponding colored corn so at harvest time that entire field will only contain that one color corn. Each fall these fields are harvested and the stalks are stripped down, the husks are removed and each corn ear is sized and then cut in half along its longitudinal axis. Next those individual half-ears are stapled onto the panels according to the numbered color required.

The borders surrounding each of the main murals are made of native grains and grasses and the geometric patterns are again attained by stapling different colored and textured grasses onto the building's exterior. It costs about \$130,000 to update the building's design each year. There is no admission charged, but donations are graciously accepted. The building also houses a interior stadium whose venue can seat up to 3,000 people. Basketball and other sports activities are held during season and various musical concerts are performed as well each year. Kenny Rogers is one of the artists scheduled for this year and Willy Nelson has performed in the past. The interior walls contain photos of all of the various designs that have been used every since the original Corn Palace opened in 1892. However there was no new mural in 2006 because of extreme draught on the plains.



Outside view of the front of the Corn Palace



One of the 6 murals panels on the bldg. exterior



View of motorcycle mural and border treatment



Me in front of a photo of one of the past layouts



Close up of corn and grasses that coat the building