

## Red Cloud Mine Thanksgiving Week Field Trip Report

WOW! That was amazing. We had 11 people join us on the trip to the famous Red Cloud Mine in La Paz County, Arizona (<https://www.mindat.org/loc-3348.html>). The Red Cloud Mine is an old Lead/Galena mine world famous for its orange Wulfenite crystals.

The color ranges from a deep shade of bright/energetic almost neon orange to a burnt orange/red, and even to brown.

About half of the group spent their nights in the Martinez Lake area while others camped at the mine site. The mine is about four hours from San Diego. However, with the final 17 miles being through what was mostly a sandy wash, it took some people a bit longer to navigate. The wash was passable by 2WD, provided you were willing to embrace the concept of maximizing momentum at the expense of control AND combine that with a bit of 'drifting' (as the cool kids say). However, at the end of each trip through the wash, it was much easier to peel the fingers off the steering wheels of those who had driven a 4WD.



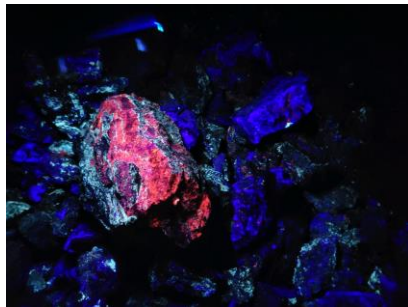
Roger, the mine caretaker, was very informative and gave us a tour of the mine workings above ground at the locality. Above ground are a large open pit with a few ledges around it, a large tailings area and the various outbuildings associated with the mining operations. Underground (accessible through an adit at the bottom of the pit) there are hundreds of feet of tunnels, shafts, drifts and stopes.



The set-up at the Red Cloud Mine is quite comfortable as mining operations go... in the middle of nowhere. Roger's got solar power that generates enough electricity to provide hot showers, lighting, a freezer and refrigerator, a security system and a few unexpected little luxuries. He also has a propane BBQ; which afforded us the opportunity to have two versions of Thanksgiving dinner; one for the Martinez Lake crowd and one for the mine crowd. Plenty of delicious food was enjoyed by everyone.

Nicholai (our oldest son) and I were there for five days. As most people did, we broke our collecting days into pieces with many generous breaks in order to refuel our bodies and regain strength in our limbs. The collecting was done by chiseling into fairly hard volcanic basaltic rock. The rock was vuggy and some of it was decomposed and fractured enough that most everyone was able to work through a significant amount of material. Lots of Wulfenite was collected. Among the specimens collected there were a couple of large plates with multiple bladed crystals on a few faces of the rock as well as spectacular single crystals and clusters, suitable for mounting and display.

On Saturday, Roger took us to the Pure Potential (North Geronimo) Mine (<https://www.mindat.org/loc-4611.html>); about two miles north of the Red Cloud Mine. The North Geronimo is a Lead mine that has some wildly beautiful Vanadinite crystals. Maybe were underground for a few hours, but I am not one to ask as I lose all track of time once I see a beautiful crystal in front of me! To me, it seemed like a few minutes. There as well, our team collected matrix pieces that were blanketed with Vanadinite crystals, as well as small clusters of crystals. Vanadinite can have extremely dramatic/vivid shades of yellow, orange and/or red. In some locations—where all three colors occurred—it looked like what I would imagine fire to look like if it could be crystalized.



While the Red Cloud Mine is most famous for Wulfenite, it also has some spectacular (and incredibly large) specimens of Fluorite, Calcite and Willemite. So, almost every night, we'd head to the pit or the tailings with shortwave and longwave UV lights in hand hoping to find specimens that had all three on one piece. All three of the minerals fluoresce, but the Willemite is also phosphorescent.

And—on a side note—even though we were in what seemed like the middle of nowhere and out of touch with the world, we actually ran into a family with kids that attend school in El Cajon with Nicholai. A most happy coincidence.

By all accounts, this was a great trip. A variety of incredible specimens were collected above ground and below ground, no vehicles got stuck in the sand, we enjoyed plenty of good food and great conversation, there were no injuries, new friends were made and existing friendships were reinforced.

It was a trip so enjoyable, every day was Thanksgiving!

Following are several additional images from the trip (photo credits: Madeline, Randy, Tina and John). Some might say that my priorities are out of order as I took more images of the specimens than of the wonderful people who had joined us on this trip. Please forgive me. I'll do better next time 😊 ...



Just after climbing out of the North Geronimo Mine.



Randy extracting a significant Vanadinite specimen from the North Geronimo Mine.



Nicholai and Brian working on separate pockets in the North Geronimo Mine.



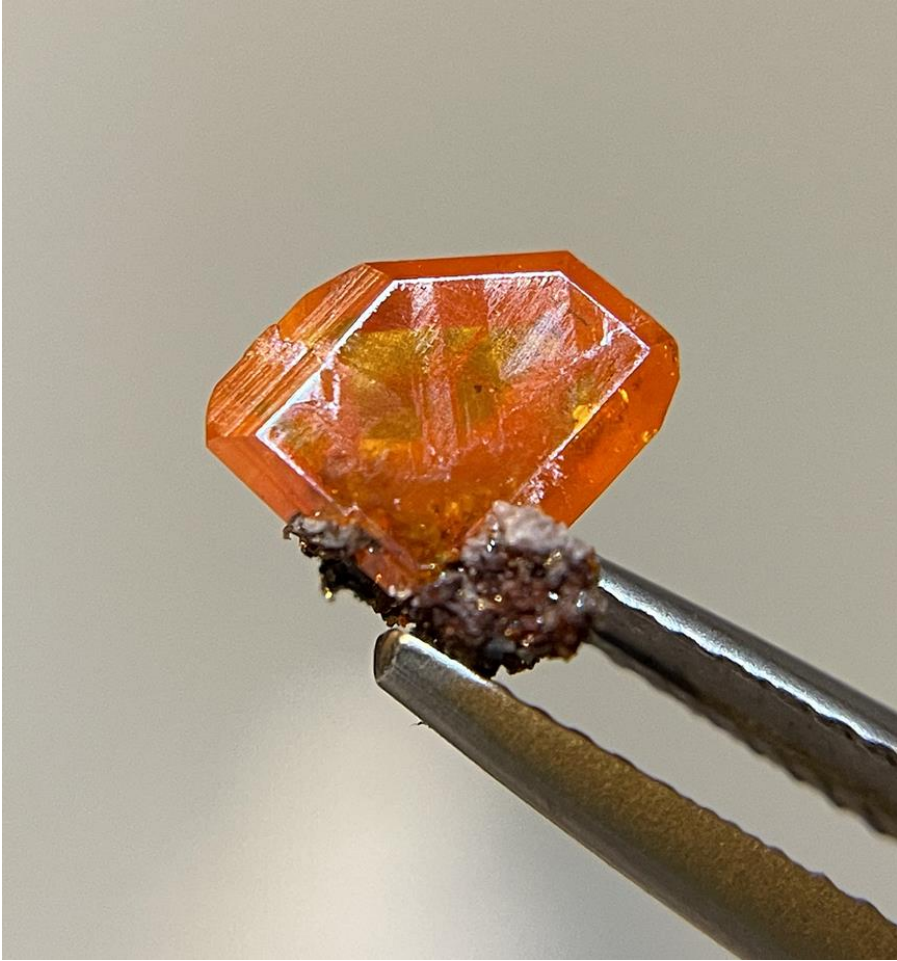
Nicholai's Vanadanite pocket!



A prized (but, still dusty) Vanadanite cluster from the pocket.



Wulfenite from the Red Cloud Mine.



Wulfenite from the Red Cloud Mine.





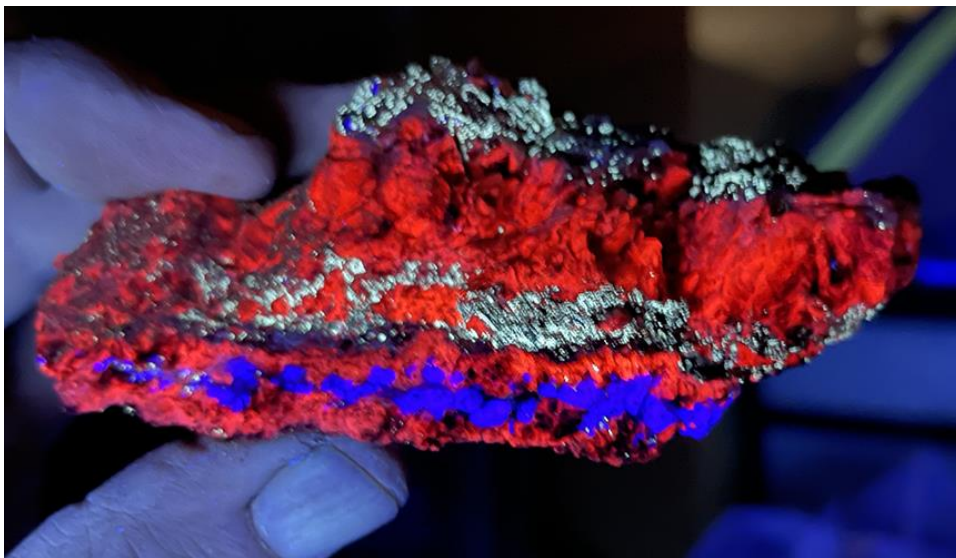
Willemite from the Red Cloud Mine.



Quartz on Fluorite from the Red Cloud Mine.



Calcite from the Red Cloud Mine.



Fluorite (bluish purple), Calcite (red) and Willemitite (white) from the Red Cloud Mine.



A small plate of Vanadanite from the North Geronimo Mine.



Wulfenite crystals on matrix from the Red Cloud Mine.



Galena from the Red Cloud Mine.



Wulfenite crystals with Fluorite on Calcite and Basalt from the Red Cloud Mine.

###