



The Canyons...

The ride through the ‘canyons’ was to be our major ride for the year starting at home in North Monterey County, California. It seems time goes by so fast and we always have reasons to postpone trips but we end up missing special times to enjoy our lives. I hope to encourage you to take the time and enjoy trips on your motorcycle. I know some like short rides and some like the long rides so ride the ride you are comfortable in, but *ride and have fun*.

I wanted to check out the areas of Southern Utah/Northern Arizona so I could re-plan for ‘hub’ rides in the future. The trip was 9 days, Saturday to Sunday. The route included National Parks and scenic roads from California to Utah and back. After hours of map and internet research I came up with a route using the HOG Ride Planner that captured most, if not all, of the interesting areas. These include Yosemite National Park, Death Valley NP, Zion NP, Bryce NP, Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, Capitol Reef NP, Colorado River, Arches NP, Dead Horse Point State Park, Canyonlands NP, Gooseneck SP, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, Vermillion Cliffs NM, Grand Canyon – North Rim NP, Coral Pink Sand Dunes SP, Cedar Breaks Area (we missed the NM but rode over the pass), Nevada Great Basin HWY 93, The Loneliest Road in America HWY 50, and Ebbetts Pass HWY 4. Yes, this is miles of roads to ride but well worth it, now I know what to do for the next few rides.

The ride was about 2880 miles and a few days were 360+ miles and some were less than 300. It seemed to be the best plan to take in so much area. I used 70 gallons of gas averaging 41 MPG and costing \$256. We had a cool ride over Tioga Pass and the next day was hot through Death Valley to Saint George, Utah. Death Valley was 95 degrees at 9:30am and we met about 40 Austrian/German

Harley riders touring the US. It was an interesting ride when we got close to Utah, the road seemed to go into the side of the mountain and then we were in the canyon area and out of the desert. What a quick transition.

The third day was going to be a long day and we were going through major parks, Zion, Bryce, Grand Staircase, Capitol Reef. We ended up in Green River but not until after a strong wind storm. Zion was so packed we couldn’t find parking at the visitor center so we just rode through the park, stopping at pull-outs to take in the scenery. Bryce was so cool, we need to go back and hike down into the canyon there. I really enjoyed the road through Grand Staircase as it weaved through the country side. When we got to Capitol Reef the visitor center was already closed and so we decided to pass on the scenic ride into the park and just cruise the main road. The road into the park isn’t going anywhere so we can come back to it next time. On exiting Capitol Reef we knew we had about one and a half hour ride from Hanksville to get to Green River. The weather was starting to get a bit grey, which was unusual for this time of year. By the time we got to HWY 70 we hit a very strong wind storm, Maggie was a bit concerned but I had confidence in the Road King so we rode through to the hotel.

On the fourth day we took a ride east on HWY 70 and got off on 128 which travels down the Colorado River toward Moab. This road starts out flat and prairie like but soon gets into some very deep red rock canyons, and soon we were seeing bicycles and campers along the river with raft trips getting started. Moab is a perpetual bicycle store, it seems to have one every other store front. Got some gas and drinks and headed to Arches. I didn’t realize how big these rock formations were until you see them up close. We went to ‘The Windows’ arches and then to ‘Delicate Arch’,

which is the arch on the Utah license plate. On the roads we started to recognize the motorcycles we passed as it seemed everyone was going to the same places as we crossed Utah and Arizona.

We left Arches and headed toward Dead Horse Point and Canyonlands. What a spectacular view from these places. Dead Horse Point is set out on a small mesa and the vista was almost 270 degrees around the point. At Canyonlands you could see for ever, canyons inside canyons. We ended the day at Monticello and it was laundry day. It was getting colder and the day before it snowed at Monticello so we knew the next day might be a bit wet.

When we left in the morning there was new snow on the mountains outside the hotel. The route was going to take us to Natural Bridges State Park and then down the Moki Dugway past Valley of the Gods but since it was raining we had to pass on the Dugway which is a gravel road down the canyon edge. We will save this for the next trip. We rode south on 191 and then turned up 261 to Gooseneck which is where the San Juan River does a serpentine path cutting deep gorges into the plateau and it is set out in front of you at the lookout. The weather was a bit cold and we had a few light showers so we continued down through Mexican Hat and stopped for a warm coffee and snack. When we got back on the road we started to see Monument Valley and the place where Forest Gump got tired of running and went home. We went into Monument Valley and to see these large monoliths, you get a humbling feeling of how small we really are. The cold and rain was starting to get us down so we started out to Kayenta. From there we went south on 160 to 98 and cut up to Page. All this land is Navajo reservation and we passed a coal mine where an automatic train loads and then travels to Page where the Navajo Power Plant is. It was told to me that they call it a ghost train because there is not one person aboard. The country was beautiful and the roads were very good. Page was warmer so we thawed out and relaxed when we got there.

The next morning we went out to see the Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell. This day was anticipated by Maggie and I since we were going to the Grand Canyon. We have backpacked the canyon twice from the south rim but we never had a chance to be at the north rim. The ride from Page took us to Marble Canyon and the Navajo Bridge where we saw a pair of condors there that made the area their home. Traveling on toward the Grand Canyon we started to climb into pine forests and stopped at Jacob Lake before heading into the National Park. After gas and lunch we started out to the park. The road travels through a black burned-out forest where a fire has been. Then we traveled through large meadows where deer were feeding and finally to the park entrance. It was different from the south rim as we were in a fairly dense forest and up at 8800 feet. When we arrived at the lodge we were able to see the canyon through large windows, it seemed as though they were paintings of the canyon. The lodge is built right on the

edge of the rim, rooms here book up a year in advance. We spent some time walking out on the rim trail and absorbing the views, remembering the backpacking and spotting the places we had been on those trips. We took a ride out to Cape Royal where we could see the Colorado River from the rim. After another restful time at the rim we had to continue back to Jacob Lake and on to Kanab.

Kanab is where I would recommend as a hub center for rides in these parts. From here you could take day rides and loop rides to many of the national parks and scenic areas.

The next morning we headed out toward Coral Pink Sand Dunes, which was told to be a 'must see' place. The roads in these areas are so nice and the landscapes are so different from our home area. When we came upon the dunes it seemed a bit different in color but not until we actually walked out on them did we realize the deep color of the sand. This day was going to take us up to Cedar Breaks area at 9900+ feet then down through Cedar City and out to Nevada and the Great Basin Highway up to Ely. Utah 14 took us up and over Cedar Breaks and through lava fields where the aspen trees grew in the middle of the flows. Then from Cedar City we headed out toward Nevada and the Great Basin Highway. Contrasting to the previous ride we now were in a very large valley with mountains on both sides. We gassed up at Pioche, another great small mining town, and the next gas was 110 mile up the road. We stopped half way where there were a few ranch buildings and horses running in the fields. As we progressed toward Ely we could see snow capped mountains and long straight roads. Coming into Ely we heard the whistle of the steam train blowing far off. The train makes a run to the copper mines daily, the mines just re-opened and is now a working mine.

The next day was the survival of the 'Loneliest Road in America', highway 50. This is featured as a one page ad in HOG Tails and Enthusiast. We started at Ely where we got the guide stamped at the Train Station, then off to Eureka, Austin and Fallon. This is not the loneliest road, it is a great ride up and down over mountain passes and through valleys. We stopped at the Shoe Tree where you could find any make of shoe hanging from all the branches of the cottonwood tree. Along the way we passed Sand Mountain and it was packed with ATV's and toy haulers parked tightly together... must be fun.

The last day we headed up to Fernley to get the last stamp and then back down to 50 over to Carson City Harley Davidson. After a stroll through the isles we continued our ride home through Markleeville and over Ebbetts pass and down to Murphy and Jamestown. After a nice food break in Jamestown it was smooth sailing across the valley and over Pacheco pass home.

What a ride and when can I go back!

Bruce and Maggie Smith



Yosemite



Bryce



Death Valley



Grand Staircase – Escalante



Zion



Capitol Reef



Arches



Grand Canyon – North Rim



Canyonlands



Maggie and Bruce



Monument Valley



Way home