

Southern Utah Motorcycle Tour April, 2007

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The motorcycle is a Yamaha TW200, 196cc. The load includes camping gear, food for a week, up to two gallons of water, repair tools, and extra gas, probably 80 pounds total. Though the bike gets 75-80 mpg even with this load, the little 1.9 gallon tank limits the range to about 140 miles. I carried three MSR fuel bottles, two on the back bicycle bottle cages and one in the front water bottle bag zip-tied to the front fork, adding another 50-60 miles. All of the cargo bags are recycled bicycle stuff - panniers, the yellow bag from my BOB bike trailer, and a rack-top bag converted into my tank bag.



I carried the motorcycle in the back of my Tacoma pickup from Port Angeles, WA to Price, UT, where I left the truck. From Price I headed south into the San Rafael Swell, following a good oiled gravel road. The best part is Buckhorn Wash, a nice canyon with some pictograph panels.



At right is a demonstration of taking a photo thru binoculars. I spotted a cave high up on the cliff, unaccessible except by rappelling down from the top. For the telephoto shot of it I held the binoculars in front of the camera, set to max telephoto, and lined it up using the monitor window. This appeared to be a large cave system since there was another smaller entrance above and to the left but not visible from this point.



On the way out of San Rafael Swell to the south, two views from the same place. At left the way down to Goblin Valley and to Hiway 24 north of Hanksville. At right are the Henry Mountains in the distance. Incredibly (by my previous bicycle-touring standards), I'd be spending that night three quarters of the way up the *opposite* side of the Henrys.



Serious dried ruts on the way up into the Henrys, suggesting why they say these roads may be impassible in wet weather. At right, McMillan Springs BLM Campground at 8400 feet elevation, which I had all to myself. Cold at night but not bad.



In the morning before packing up, I drove another thousand feet higher into the Henrys. At left, the yellow dot above my bike is a school bus! I went over there to investigate, but found its deadend road blocked by snow, so it had been there all winter. Perhaps its used as a field camp by the BLM, etc. At right is the view south from the same spot, overlooking Waterpocket Fold. After packing and descending, I followed the valley to the left on the way down to Lake Powell.



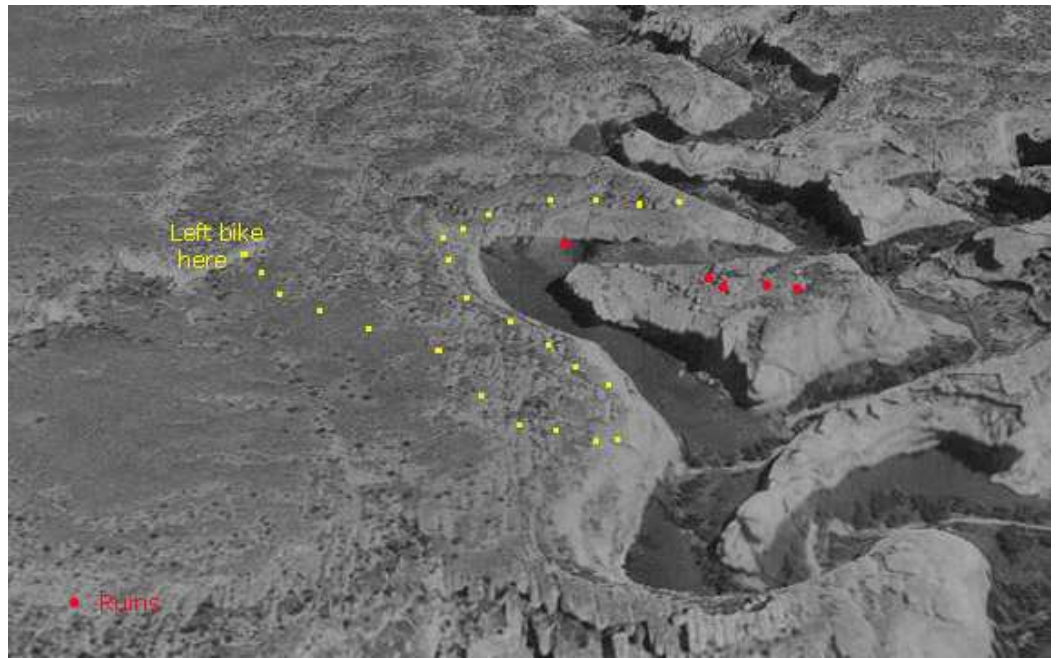
Along the Notum-Bullfrog Road in Waterpocket Fold. Note that the strata in the distance are raised to 45 degrees. These continue for miles all the way down the valley. At right is one of the many stretches of sand that almost did me in. The front tire would tend to "wash out", and I did some wild gyrations recovering and managed to keep from going down. After about fifty miles of this I was glad to see pavement again as I got closer to Lake Powell.



Approaching Lake Powell and Bullfrog Marina. Stayed in the Park Service campground there (with macho guys with huge pickups pulling bloated ski boats), and took the Halls Crossing Ferry to the east side of the lake in the morning. The captain told me that the boat was built in 2000 in Salt Lake City, cut crosswise into four pieces, and trucked to Lake Powell. Still must have been some wide loads.



Along Hiway 276 going east from Lake Powell. Hardly any traffic, no wind, just purring along at 45. At right is Castle Ruin, just off the hiway if you know where to look.



My next destination was Grand Gulch. Gunvor and I had backpacked in the gulch years before and had seen Anasazi ruins everywhere. Later someone told me that there were even more ruins along the rims, so I decided to drive as close to it as I could on a primitive track off the road to the Collins Springs trailhead. As on the left, it was not a good road, and got worse, with steep dips, sand, washouts, and rough slickrock. It went along for about ten miles before deadending on slickrock overlooking the gulch. The place where I arrived was above a section of the gulch where a meander had been cut through producing Pollys Island, a nearly vertical sided monolith with about twenty acres of flat on top, including trees, grass, and overhanging rocks. Through the binoculars I could see that there were many ruins under the overhangs, indicating this had been used as a refuge for a large number of people, though I couldn't see how they got up there. I couldn't get down into the canyon from my rim to look for a way up on the island so I had to be content with seeing them at a distance. The oblique air photo at right is taken from NASA's WorldWind.



Two views of Grand Gulch at Pollys Island, giving a better view of the height of the cliffs, even though you can't see all the way down into the canyon at the left. The way up may be in the cleft in the rocks at right, the only possibility I could see in walking two thirds of the way around it on the rim.



At left is a binocular shot of one of the ruins at the top of the island, the only one that showed much. At right is a ruin in the bottom of the canyon. Unable to descend into the canyon, I couldn't get to any of them. Amazing to think these were abandoned at the time of the Crusades.



Returning to the west side of Lake Powell via Hite and Hanksville, I went south through Boulder to Escalante and turned off on the Hole In The Rock Road. This 55-mile unpaved road leads down to where in 1879 the Mormon pioneers blasted a route down to the Colorado River on their way to settle the present town of Bluff, UT. Due to the terrain, they averaged just 1.7 miles a day to complete the 290 miles. Hole In The Wall was the worst. For six weeks they blasted and picked at the crevice to widen it to lower their wagons, 200 horses, and 1,000 cattle down this crevice, at one point extending an existing three foot shelf by driving in stakes into the rock and piling vegetation and rocks on them.



Two views of Lake Powell from the rocks above Hole In The Rock. Camping here was very windy, with no places for shelter on the slickrock. All night sand and dust blew into my tent through the vents and got into everything.



On the way back out I stopped to see the slot canyons at Coyote Wash. Though 26 miles in on this rough road, these are very popular (consequently the upper road is much worse, with very bad sand washboard due to the traffic). There are four slot canyons off this wash, one of which is too narrow to go all the way through. The most popular is Peekaboo, shown above. Once negotiating the initial climb, its easy enough, with little arches and passages requiring you to turn sideways a lot of the way before it exits into a wider wash after a quarter mile.

So that's it. I stayed on back highways after that heading north to Price again. A total of 900 miles of riding over 8 days, about a third off-pavement.