



Experience Utah

presented by: **Moab Area Travel Council**

Looping from Phoenix

Tina L. Lopez
photos: Robert Riberia

Which way do we go? One of the unique things about Moab is that with so many great "to and from" routes to choose from, you can visit time and time again and never travel the exact same route twice. While it is impossible to mention every possible combination, here are few of the favorite ways to reach Moab from Phoenix, Arizona.

If you love the fast pace of free-way riding, you'll have to get it while

you can, by taking Interstate 17 from Phoenix to Flagstaff. After 136 miles, you will then be forced onto scenic US 89, where you will meet up with those who prefer the slower, more scenic route.

Like to take it slow, with lots of curves and great scenery? Then you'll want to head northwest out of Phoenix on US 60 north, to Wickenburg. From Wickenburg take US 93 northwest until its junction with SR 89, which will take you through Congress to Prescott.

A short distance from Congress,

you will be able to see the highway and switchbacks that you will soon embark on as you climb from the desert to the high desert grasslands. Views from the switchbacks are spectacular and give you a panoramic view for many miles as you climb more than 1,000 feet. About 15 miles from Prescott, the terrain changes again as you enter the pinyon-juniper country that slowly turns into Ponderosa pines. Just north of Prescott take SR 89 to the junction of SR 89A. Turn right onto 89A and follow the road as it snakes up Mingo Mountain, over a 7,000-foot pass and then descends 2,000 feet into



the historic town of Jerome. Steep drop-offs without guardrails will get your adrenaline pumping and give your body a workout as you navigate the turns, downshifting to low gear, then opening the throttle for the occasional straightaway.

Located high on Cleopatra Hill (5,200 feet) is the historical copper mining town of Jerome. Known as

"America's most vertical city", Jerome is a unique and friendly town and an ideal place to stretch the legs, relax those tense shoulders, and calm your nerves.

From Jerome, continue on SR 89A through Sedona to Flagstaff, where you have a choice. You can take US 180 to SR 64 to make a loop to the south entrance of the Grand Can-

yon (adds 85 miles) and reunite with SR 89 outside Cameron; or you can just continue on SR 89 from Flagstaff directly to Cameron.

Take US 160 15-miles north of Cameron through Tuba City, and Tonalear, to Kayenta, where you will get on US 163. From the Arizona/Utah border, US 163 traverses stunning Monument Valley with its old west desert scenery and red rock spires. Northeast of Monument Valley, you'll arrive at Mexican Hat, a small Utah town named for the nearby sandstone formation that looks like an inverted sombrero.

If you're ready for a break and want to see a spectacular view, go 9 miles northwest of Mexican Hat on SR 261 to the Goosenecks State Park. At this primitive park, you can look into a 1,000-foot-deep chasm carved by the San Juan River. Three hundred million years in the making, the river meanders back and forth, flowing for more than 5 miles while progressing only 1 linear mile toward the Colorado River and Lake Powell. (The view is most spectacular between 10 am and 2 pm, when the sun illuminates the river.)

You will see signs for Natural Bridges National Monument, but SR 261 is not recommended for motorcycle touring due to a 2.2-mile section known as Moki Dugway, which is gravel with 10% grades and switchbacks. Twenty-two miles outside of Bluff is the SR 95 Junction that can be taken for a 60 mile round trip ride into the Natural Bridges National Monument. Located 10.5 miles off US 191 (on SR 95) are the Butler Wash Indian

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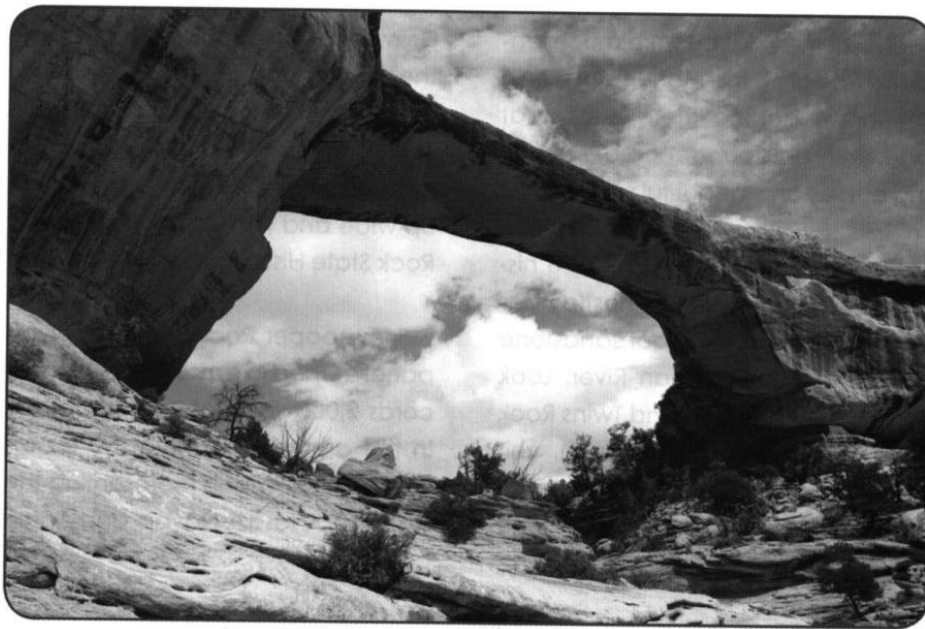
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Ruins, which, with a paved parking lot and restrooms, offer a great opportunity to stretch your legs. An easy ½-mile hike across some small washes and over slickrock, will bring you to the ruins overlook. The parking lot is paved and toilet facilities are available.

At Natural Bridges National Monument, a 9-mile one-way loop road has several overlooks of the three bridges, currently known as Sipapu, Kachina and Owachomu after their names were changed to reflect the Hopi Indian history of the area. Owachomu is probably the most spectacular, and also the easiest to hike to - the path into the can-



yon underneath the bridge is only a few hundred meters. It is the old-

est bridge in the park, and rock falls have reduced the thickness to only 9

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feet, so it may not be here much longer. Not only is the Monument worth the drive, getting there is a great ride, with an abundance of sweeping curves and beautiful scenery.

Return to US 163 and into the historic community of Bluff, nestled between dramatic 300-foot sandstone cliffs and the San Juan River. Look for Locomotive Rock and Twins Rock (two distinct natural features), visit the Navajo Twin Rocks Trading Post and stop in the Twins Rock Café for a delicious "Shepherd" sandwich.

Draw where you will drive through the bottom of a narrow gap between brush-covered slickrock walls and then suddenly, after a sharp bend in the road, the terrain opens up wide and you are at Newspaper Rock State Historical Monument.

Newspaper Rock is a petroglyph panel etched in sandstone which records 2,000 years of human activity in the area. Etched into the desert varnish are symbols representing the Fremont, Anasazi, Navajo and Anglo cultures.

State Historical Monument and then into Canyonlands National Park.

Whichever route you take the drive is well worth the effort as you drive along Indian Creek through sheer red cliff towers. When you come to the Needles district the terrain makes a dramatic change with hundreds of red sandstone spires appearing. While the Needles landscape is a jumble of sculpted rock spires, arches, canyons, grabens and potholes, the dominant formations are the needles themselves.



A few miles outside of Bluff, US Highway 163 becomes US Highway 191, taking you through Blanding to Monticello, where you will want to top off the gas tank and choose one of two routes into Canyonlands National Park.

If getting to the park fast is your preference, go 14-miles north of Monticello, then take SR 211 for 35 miles into the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park. The first 10 miles is a barren stretch of relatively flat road until you enter Harts

Those wanting more scenery and more curves, should opt for the second route from Monticello, which takes you over the Abajo Mountains and connects to SR 211 just before it enters Harts Draw. From Main Street in Monticello, turn west on 200 South to Abajo Drive. You'll meander over the mountain for approximately 8 miles to Monticello Lake, where the road forks. Stay to the right and enjoy the beautiful views as you drop down to the desert floor and connect with SR 211, where a left turn will take you to the Newspaper Rock

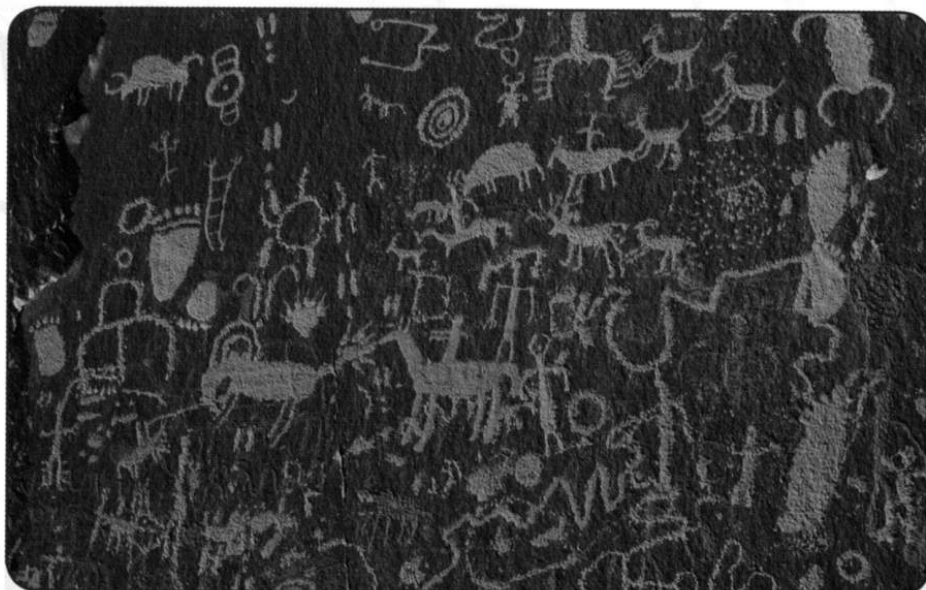
The 10-mile scenic drive will invoke your sense of wonder with its spectacular views of this amazing spectacle. The district's extensive trail system provides endless opportunities for long day hikes and backpacking with foot trails and four-wheel-drive roads leading to such features as Angel Arch, the Confluence Overlook, Elephant Hill and Chesler Park. (Tours into the back-country can be booked with one of the many experienced tour operators in Moab.)

Be sure to stop at the Needles

Outpost for their proverbial \$100 hamburger (prepared on the outdoor grill) and top off the gas tank for the return trip on SR 211 to US 191, where with a left turn, you will be just 40-miles from your ultimate destination...Moab, Utah.

For more information contact

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