CALIFORNIA TOUR TEST
Suzuki V-Strom 1050XT

HIGH PERFORMANCE, NO PAIN
KTM 1290 Super Duke R

RIDING WITH MAN’S
BEST FRIEND

LONG-HAUL
READY

2020 HONDA AFRICA TWIN
ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

Riding PCH in
Northern California

Perfect 5-Day
Utah Parks Loop

Long-Term Rides:
Kawasaki Ninja 650
FIVE DAYS OF Bliss
THE BEST OF UTAH AND ARIZONA
Many Rider readers know that southern Utah and northern Arizona offer a great deal of advantages to motorcyclists, the first being a lack of traffic, even in high season. After 24 years of riding this area I can suggest one, near perfect, 5-day ride. This loop route begins and ends in Las Vegas, Nevada, an easy-access city with great rental places. The route comprises some of the best roads ever, and is so dense with beauty it will be hard to absorb it all. You won’t hit every famous spot, Moab for instance, but that’s a good reason to return. A touring, sport or adventure-touring bike is ideal for this trip. Cruisers and sport bikes will work, but the first day may be a bit long.

Suzuki’s V-Strom is an ideal choice for this sort of trip. While cruisers and sport bikes work, sport or adventure touring bikes are a better match for this terrain.
DAY ONE: LEAVING LAS VEGAS

The Green Valley Ranch on the edge of Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada, is a great place to start. It avoids all the hassle of the Strip, but do leave early on this long first day. Motor east past Lake Las Vegas on State Route 167 along the top of Lake Mead into the Valley of Fire. Instant awesomeness! Turn left on Valley of Fire Highway and then right into the Valley of Fire State Park Visitor Center. Stay to your left before the parking lot and ride up into the hills 3-4 miles on Mouse’s Tank Road. Neither Moab nor Sedona have anything to beat this remarkable road. A mile or two after you pass Rainbow Vista, find a place to turn around and ride back out. The view in the opposite direction gives a totally different perspective. Head north to Interstate 15 and take it through St. George, Utah. This 70-mile stretch is the only significant section of interstate on the loop. Exit on Utah State Route 9 to Zion National Park, which takes you into one of Zion’s charms is the milelong tunnel completed in 1930. Several “windows” carved into the rocks provide glimpses of the mountains outside. But don’t stop for pics.
and through the park. It is a magnificent 25-mile road over all too soon, so stop on occasion and soak in the incredible rock formations and glorious trees. Depart Zion and stay on State Route 9 to U.S. Route 89 North, then follow State Route 12 east to Bryce Canyon National Park. Unlike Zion, where you ride through it, enter Bryce, ride up a 30-mile-long road to Rainbow Point at the top, and then come back down. There are frequent opportunities to pull over and gaze down into the amphitheater of fascinating rock formations called “hoodoos.” These tall, slender rock spires protrude from the floor of the arid canyon, reaching a height of 10 stories.

After leaving Bryce, continue on State Route 12 through the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, past Boulder and into Torrey, Utah, for the night. The Grand Staircase gets its name from the land rising in wide, tilted terraces, stepping up in huge colorful cliffs of limey siltstone, pink, deep red, shale-gray, white and then vermilion. The 800,000-acre park is one of the driest and most remote in the U.S.

**DAY TWO:**

**YOU’VE GOT OPTIONS**

Torrey is an ideal place to stop and avail yourself of many wonderful day trips, so I recommend staying a second night here and trying one of these compelling options:

**Ride Burr Trail to Bullfrog.** This ride showcases some of the most stunning country Utah has to offer, winding by the Henry Mountains, through the canyons of Waterpocket Ford, past the red Circle Cliffs and Long Canyon. Charles Burr moved his family from Salt Lake City and established Burrville, Utah, in 1876. He developed the trail to move his cows more easily between their summer and winter pastures, through what had once been nearly impassable country. To take the trail today, follow State Route 24 east from Torrey to State Route 12 and take it south to Boulder. There, turn left onto Burr Trail, heading east, and follow it south. It’s about 50 miles and you won’t be going fast. While the first part is paved, the road becomes graded gravel from Muley Twist Canyon until just above Halls Creek. Burr trail ends at paved State Route 276, which you can follow south to reach the Bullfrog Marina on Lake Powell. Return by the same route and experience different vistas the entire way.

**Ride to Fish Lake.** For this shorter route, head west on State Route 24 from Torrey, then take State Route 72 north. After 10 miles on Route 72, go left onto Forest Road FR036 toward the Mill Meadows Reservoir. Follow FR036 north
around the top of the Reservoir. Head back south on FR046 leading to Fish Lake at an elevation of 8,848 feet. Local anglers typically catch large lake trout, also called mackinaw. As you head back, look for the large Pando aspen grove about a mile out of town. Experts say this entire mass of trees is a single living organism with a unique genetic marker and one massive underground root system, estimated to be 80,000 years old with a collective weight of 6,600 tons.

**Hike.** Capitol Reef National Park is just 10 miles east of Torrey on Route 24 and is a hiker’s paradise. Trails are

Access to Bryce Canyon Amphitheater’s formations, called Hoodoos, is via a 30-mile-long road to Rainbow Point at the top.
graded Easy (green dot), Moderate (blue square) and Strenuous (black diamond). Pick up maps of any of the 18 hikes at the Visitor Center on Route 24 as you enter the park. The Hickman Bridge trail is easy and provides a spectacular scenic trek up to a large natural arch. Capitol Gorge trail is also fun. The trail becomes narrower as you go in and the cliffs rise high above you on both sides. At one point you are in a 12-to-15-foot narrow slot, staring up hundreds of feet at the cliffs above. I especially like this trail when it’s hot, as shade is plentiful.

**DAY THREE: MEXICAN HAT, MONUMENT VALLEY AND MORE**

Leave Torrey, go east on Route 24 through Capitol Reef National Park toward Hanksville. This stretch of Route 24 offers spectacular twisties with little elevation change. Turn southeast on State Route 95 to wind through Glen Canyon and past Natural Bridges National Monument. Make sure to stop at the Hite Overlook. It's on the south side of the highway, just 1/4 mile off the road, with a stunning view of the far north end of Lake Powell. Cross the Hite Bridge as Lake Powell flows hundreds of feet below and continue on Route 95 south and east to Natural Bridges National Monument. The three bridges, Kachina, Owachomo and Sipapu, are named for Native Americans in this area. Ten miles east of State Routes 95 and 276, watch carefully and take State Route 261 on the right. This road, called the Trail of the Ancients, leads south to the iconic Moki Dugway. This three-mile, unpaved set of hairpin turns drops 1,100 feet from Cedar Mesa to the valley floor. While difficult if windy, it is well graded. Most riders have no problem. A turnout at the top provides a dramatic view into the vast distance and a look down on the curves going back and forth in what looks like the horizontal wall of a cliff.

Author Steve Larsen and Flyers “Chairman” Walt Lynd pose at Mexican Hat. After Walt passed, the group's May ride was named the Chairman’s Ride, in his honor.
A mining company moving uranium from the Happy Jack mine built the road in the late 1950s. Today, signs alert you to 10% grades and 5 mph switchbacks and warn vehicles longer than 28 feet and weighing above 10,000 pounds to stay away.

Cross the valley on Route 261 to U.S. Route 163 south to Mexican Hat. After posing with your bike in front of the odd hat-shaped rock, continue to the small village of Mexican Hat, a good place to gas up and grab a cold drink. Continue on U.S. 163 about 20 miles into Monument Valley. Riding here, visions of John Wayne and famous westerns will flash through your mind. Momentarily, your bike becomes a painted pony as you cross these remarkable plains no movie has ever really captured.

At the Arizona/Utah state line there are a couple of places to stay. Goulding’s Lodge or The View hotel are both very good, but remote, so make sure you book in advance.

The red rocks of Zion and Bryce, the splendor of Glen Canyon and the wildness of Escalante are the altars in many a motorcyclist’s church.

Opportunities abound to take tours into Monument Valley aboard modified pickup trucks with native guides. Beyond The View hotel is a 17-mile road meandering through many of the most iconic rock formations. Although it’s an unpaved road recommended for 4-wheel drive vehicles only, skilled riders can manage it. Watch for loose sand which piles into drifts, challenging even good riders to stay upright.

DAY FOUR:
GRAND CANYON, SOUTH RIM

Begin the shortest day of this trip by heading south on U.S. 163 to Kayenta and then right toward Tuba City. Just after Tuba City take U.S. Route 89 south for 38 miles and then Arizona State Route 64 west to the Grand Canyon’s East Entrance. Route 64 provides stopping points to view the Little Colorado River gorge, with increasingly dramatic views as you...
Once in Grand Canyon Village and parked at your hotel, take time to stroll along the wide, well-paved Rim Walk, to see the Grand Canyon from the south side. To truly experience the canyon, walk a mile or two down the Bright Angel Trail (which can be narrow with steep drop-offs in places) and then come back up. Other short hikes include the Kaibab Trail to Cedar Ridge (three miles round-trip) or Skeleton Point (six miles total). After watching the sunset at the Canyon, head to dinner.

**DAY FIVE:**

**RETURNING TO LAS VEGAS**

Head south on Route 64, going west on Interstate 40 to Seligman, where you’ll exit west onto historic Route 66 through Peach Springs and on to Kingman. Riding at least a portion of Route 66 is a rite of passage. Be sure to tune your stereo to hear Nat King Cole.
crooning “Get Your Kicks on Route 66.” At Kingman, take U.S. Route 93 back across the Hoover Dam to Las Vegas.

The red rocks of Zion and Bryce, the splendor of Glen Canyon and the wildness of Escalante are the altars in many a motorcyclist’s church. The humbling of spirit in the face of such landscapes has a strange and rejuvenating power. Like me, I suspect you’ll not get far before finding yourself preparing for your next ride in this magic land.