

Winter Get Away Ride Report

By Roger Ries/MN March 2007

Since Minnesota says my fish house needs to be off the ice, I decided for a little winter break to AZ to visit my Mom and Dad. But first...

It was a cold and blustery morning... it actually was this time. By the time my flight out of Mpls. was suppose to happen, 1" accumulation per hour with 25-35mph winds. Not looking good for flying to AZ. On my way to Greg and Ginny's, Gin called and said my flight was delayed about an hour. I understand I was driving in a blizzard and flights are being cancelled but mine was still a go. Cool.

I get to my sisters place and I hear planes in the air. Good sign. Greg takes me to the airport and I walk up to the ticket counter. All flights for US Airways canceled tonight and tomorrow morning. Great, but they put me on a NWA flight for later that night... 9:38pm get in AZ about 12:30.

400 flights canceled at the MSP airport but I somehow get a flight out of town. You see I have a Ducati S2R Monster 800 rented for Friday and somehow I will get to ride that thing even though everybody else is still in Minneapolis.

I'm in AZ at my mom and dad's camper getting ready for bed. T-minus 6 hours and I'm riding.

Today I head over to MCTours (AZRide.com) to rent and ride a Ducati S2R Monster. I've been looking forward to this for a long time. The bike is beautiful and very clean. Gabor keeps his fleet of motorcycles in tip-top shape and with talking to him has that passion for bikes and riding. Monica gets me all setup with the paperwork to ride and we go over my route. Both Monica and Gabor mention a couple of things to check out along the way. Even though they have done this many times you can sense that I have picked a good route and know I will have a fantastic trip today. A nice recreation map and bottle of water and I'm on my way.

I have always admired the look of the Ducati Monster and its Tubular steel trellis frame. The bike fits me well and I have a big smile on my face since I haven't ridden for over 3 months and the sound coming from the double silencer mounted high doesn't hurt either.

I'm heading up 87 from Scottsdale for South bound 188. My destination is Tonto National Forest to check out the Lower Dwelling of the Salado people.

But first I stop at Roosevelt dam. The dam originally finished in 1911 is in the Tonto National forest and is in the Salt River Valley creating Lake Roosevelt for water irrigation and some hydroelectric. It was determined the dam couldn't handle a maximum flood event so modifications were started in 1989 and completed in 1996. This completely altered the appearance of the dam. The original rubble-masonry gravity arch dam is now encased in a new concrete block structure.



Overlooking the Roosevelt Dam at the start of my trip.

I head next to Tonto National Monument and the Lower Cliff Dwelling of the Salado people. These people came and built the Upper and Lower Dwelling inside of caves during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. They built an apartment type dwelling inside the cave, or more like a hole in the side of the hill, that was about two stories high and had about 20 small rooms for living and storage. There is also an Upper Dwelling that is about twice the size but requires a reserved guided tour and about 3 hours.



The cliff dwellings of the Salado people, Tonto National Forest

I stop at Boston's Grill a few miles South on 188 for some gas and a burger. I get the Yaz Burger, 1/3 lb with a green chile, mushrooms and Swiss cheese, with fries on the side. Very good.

I continue on the 188 to Globe and head down Hwy 60 towards Apache Junction. I ride past all the copper mines in the area and soak in all the scenic sights along the way. The landscape is constantly changing in AZ. From desert with towering saguaro to snow covered mountain hills with every turn a completely different view.

Before I head back to MCTours I stop by my mom and dad's park to show off the bike. I'm heading West on the 202 and just West of the 101 my bike stops running and off to the shoulder I go. Damn I guess this thing doesn't like running on air. A call to Monica and Gabor is on his way to the rescue.

260 miles of smiles on a great bike, on a great day and thanks to some great people at AZRide.com my return home to Minnesota and two feet of snow wasn't all that bad.

Roger Ries