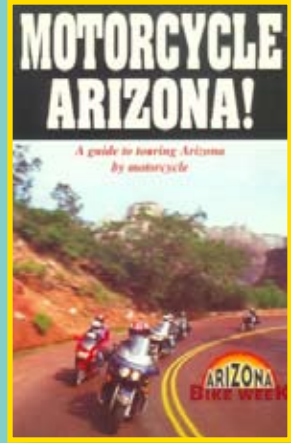


# Where to Ride

by Frank Del Monte



Cheryl and I never spend a lot of time planning our tours, and we never make room reservations. The good news is we've never-not-been-able to find a room, and some of them have been really nice. The not-so-good news is that we've slept in some pretty sleazy places now and then.

Once in Colorado we ran into rain and Redstone, Colorado at the same time. Wet and

drenched we stumbled into the only hotel in town, the Redstone Inn, and asked plaintively if they had a room. "No, I'm sorry we don't. But have you tried the Castle?" "The Castle?" we replied. "Yes, it's just down the road, I'll call for you." And that's how we ended up sleeping in the Redstone Castle Bed & Breakfast. Believe me, it is still one of our favorite experiences. The full story involves a 16-year-old piano



prodigy who thought her mom was taking her camping for her birthday, a beautiful grand piano, a roaring fireplace, two bottomless brandy snifters, and a dark and stormy night. Remind me to tell it to you sometime.

On another rainy late night we were riding some twisty-turnys in the backcountry of Canada when the lights of a small motel came seeping dully through the mist. We quickly booked a room, dragged our soft bags out of the saddlebags and sloshed our way to the door. When we walked into the room we were shocked to see thousands of mosquitoes on the walls! They were everywhere! We reloaded the bike and went back into the storm. There is a good ending to this story though. We found a nice hotel about an hour down the road.

On that same trip, Cheryl had to go back to work and flew home to Phoenix from Vermont. I took two weeks and rode back. One of my "must see's" was the Statue of Liberty. Remind me to tell you about my adventures in NYC traffic and the fun of finding a secure parking spot for the bike while I made the trip out to visit Lady Liberty. I

got back from the island late in the day and that evening found me somewhere in New Jersey on a long commercial strip with dozens of motels, and all having signs that said "Special Rates." Guess what "Special Rates" means. Yeah, hourly rates for working girls. Being young and innocent (really!) I had no idea. I should have been suspicious when the clerk asked me how long I wanted the room for, and then acted surprised when I said "all night." He must have thought I was a heck of a man! Well, that was a loud and boisterous night, I got about two hours sleep, and I didn't even get to do any boisterousing at all!

Late one fall, my good friends George and Florence were riding from Phoenix to Durango. About 50 miles east of Tuba City on the way to Kayenta, the heavens opened and dropped a frog-strangler on their heads. Wind, Rain, Lightning, Cold, you name it, they suffered it. Back then, Kayenta consisted of two gas stations, a café, and the world's smallest Holiday Inn. But, as luck would have it the vacancy light was on. George and Floss swam their way to the office and asked if they really had a room. "Yes," replied the clerk. "Could we see it first?" Floss asked sweetly. George looked at her like she was crazy-out-of-her-mind and screamed at the clerk, "WE'LL TAKE IT!" He later told me, "It could've been in a coal bin and I would've taken it."

I wish I could give credit for the following story but I can't. I either read it or heard it about 20 years ago and it has stuck with me.

A couple was riding late at night in driving rain. In the distance they saw a motel with its "Vacancy" sign lighted. They pulled in the lot just as a big Lincoln pulled in. They dismounted as quickly as they could but the Lincoln's driver was already at the desk as they entered the door. They heard the clerk apologizing that he had just rented the last room and hadn't turned off the vacancy sign. He was really sorry.

The driver turned to leave, and our couple turned to follow him when the clerk called, "Hey, what kind of bike are you riding?" Not really wanting to make small talk, the rider replied, "A Goldwing." "Wow, nice bike" the clerk replied. He then went on to tell about the several bikes he had owned. Then, as the Lincoln left the parking lot he said, "I do have one room left, I just figured you needed it more than he did."

**Ride on! Ride Safe!**

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