

# Where to Ride

by Frank Del Monte

## My 32-Year Tour

My ride to Torrey, Utah began in March 1975, and ended in July 2007. In 1974 I bought a brand new 850cc Norton Commando and wanted some riding buddies. So I posted a notice saying I was starting a Norton Club. Six guys showed up at my house, and we named ourselves the United States Norton Owners Association.

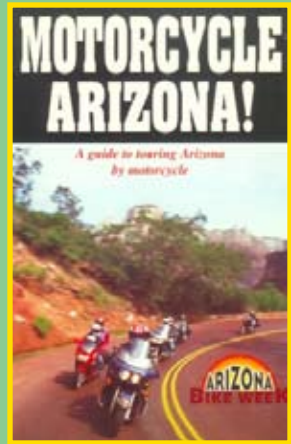
I ran the club for a few years and then, in the middle of a divorce, turned it over to the membership. I stayed active in the club until 1983 when I parked my Norton under a tarp where it sat for 18 years while life got in the way of all my plans. In 2001 after a total restoration I

named him, "The Starship Snoopy", but I still remained apart from the club. Now, in 2007 the National Rally was being held in Torrey, Utah, and I decided to go and reconnect.

Torrey is 500 miles from Phoenix or 12 hours as the Norton flies. Or in this case, as my wife's truck flies. You see, although I restored the Starship in 2001, I never

tagged it because at that time Arizona required it to pass emissions. I tried, it didn't. I was so mad I swore I wouldn't tag him until antique bikes were exempt. That happened this year so I tagged him up. Now I had a freshly rebuilt antique bike with almost no time on it, and I wasn't about to ride it 500 miles!

We loaded the Starship into Cheryl's truck and headed North. When we got to Flag-Town we cut around the bottom and picked up 89. This took us toward Page, but before we got there we hung a left onto 89-A and drove through some of the most beautiful Arizona countryside you can imagine! The Navaho Bridge and the Vermilion Cliffs area are like putting Sedona on steroids and spreading it along 40 miles of great roads. Soaring red cliffs interspaced with grey mountains rising from endless desert plains on the road to Jacob Lake, Fredonia and Kanab is a sight hard to imagine. You'd need an IMAX crew to put it on film



properly.

I hadn't been in Utah for 20 years and had forgotten how beautiful the southwest corner is. It's a land of small towns set in wide-open farming country where the fields seem to run forever. We took 89 to just past Hatch and took a hard right onto Utah Rt. 12. Utah 12 is deceptive as it wanders through small towns such as Ruby's Inn, Tropic, Cannonville, and Henrieville. Then you find out why it's called "Hell's Backbone!" Right about Escalante you suddenly find yourself riding hairpin turns along the ridgeline of a 9,796-foot tall mountain with no guardrails and 1,000-foot drop-offs on both sides. I will tell you straight out I have ridden some tough roads in my time, and this one rates a 10+ score on the pucker meter.

We made it to Torrey and found the rally grounds. The next day I fired up the Starship and we took our first ride on it in 24 years. The bike ran like a top, and we had a grand time riding through Capitol Reef National Park. It was disconcerting that the seat seemed to have shrunk since 1983, but then maybe there's a bit more of each of us now. In the next few days we rode on some of the group rides, rode by ourselves, walked and talked Nortons, and put the bike into the bike show. We had a great time meeting all the honchos running the club and re-meeting some old friends. We got some nice kudos from the membership for starting the thing way back in '75, and generally had a blast.



If you want to do some near-state riding, and you've "done" Colorado, jam up to Torrey and see some of the prettiest scenery inter-cut by some of the greatest riding roads in the nation. It's 12 hours up, 12 hours back, and you can sandwich in three or four great local area riding days in between.

By the way, the Starship took first place in Custom Café class and that made the week even nicer!

Ride on! Ride Safe!

Frank Del Monte is the author of "Motorcycle Arizona." He also owns Arizona British Bikes, a British motorcycle repair and restoration service in Phoenix. 602-647-2965. See his web site at: [www.AzBritBikes.com](http://www.AzBritBikes.com).