

## The Transamerican Trail

by Ken Hunter

Some roads are fun to ride, some are challenging and some will overwhelm you with scenic beauty but few do all three like the TAT (Transamerican Trail).



A question everyone asks is when to ride. Assuming you are riding from east to west, the earliest starting date would be the middle of June. Mountain passes in Colorado will not be open until the last week of June and possibility not until the first week of July. And even then, the passes that will be open will be limited.

Also June can be a wet month from Arkansas to Oklahoma,

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and there are roads that become impassable because of the mud. Even the best knobby tire will ball up with mud; but if you want to become a tornado chaser, that's the time to be there. One evening in western Oklahoma there were tornado threats and it put down 8 inches of rain overnight. Those are the mornings you sleep in, do a



little bike maintenance and laundry because you're not going anywhere on roads until they start to dry out. Fall would give you the best weather but then you will be riding in more dust and looser sand when you get to the western states.

My riding consist of three different areas, the physical challenge of the ride, the scenery, and the people you meet along the way. On a typical day I get up and ride for about an hour and will then stop for breakfast. I enjoy finding that restraurant where the locals hang out. In Mississippi I had stayed near the town of Clinton, and the next morning, after traveling about 50 miles, I can to a small town and decided it was time for breakfast. Finding no restaurant, I hit the general store to grab something to eat and drink. Out front some locals were sitting





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around, so I asked if they minded my joining them. After sharing what I was doing, one woman who had to be in my age range (late 60's) asked where I had spent the night. I told her I had camped just outside of Clinton, Mississippi. She then looks me straight in the eye and replies, "You know, I need to get there some day." Fifty miles away, and she hadn't been there! I couldn't help but chuckle a little. She replies with a smile, "You know I could travel but my kids would miss me."

What the TAT is great for is the varied landscape you get to ride through. From Tennessee above to Arkansas below.



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Along with a great view of the Ozarks.



Then there's Oklahoma. Almost wished I had cruise control on the DRZ. They say it's the only place while sitting at the kitchen table having breakfast you can see who's coming for dinner.





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The same is true for New Mexico.



Then we're back to that type of country we are use to, the Colorado Rockies.

The ride through Colorado is typical forest service and mining roads. Well used by jeeps, the roads are easy to navigate.

If you are looking for something a little more challenging, this would be a great time to take a side trip to Hancock, Bear Pass, or any of the other passes in the area. This is in the area around of Buena Vista.



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Cinnamon Pass was cleared about a week before I arrive.



After crossing Geyser Pass, we're in country with which most of us are familiar - the sand hills outside of Moab Utah.



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It's the next day's ride that I consider the most challenging. Up until this point I was so into the ride that I was actually disappointed when it was time to call it a day. After riding from Moab to Salina, I was so happy to get off the bike. I was exhausted.

I'm still smiling under the helmet in this picture only because I did know what the day was going to be like.

Black Dragon Canyon





You can see in this picture that the sand is still somewhat firm. I just can't imagine what it must be like later in the year after a multitude of vehicles have dug it up.



This is part of the stair steps leaving out of the Canyon. From here it was lots of sand, more sand and stair steps out of one canyon leading you into another.





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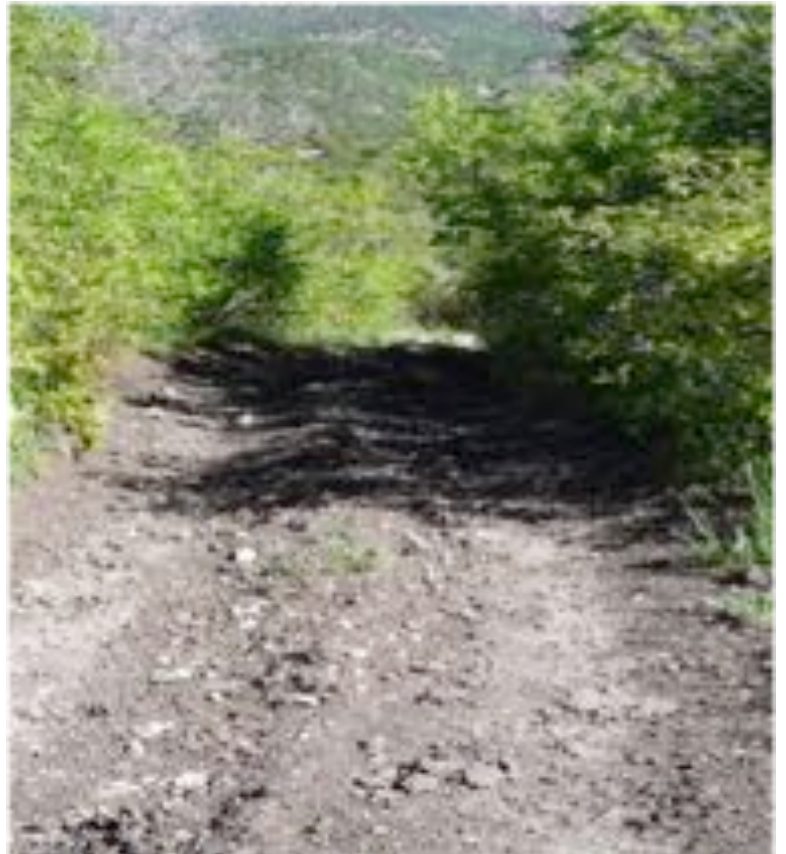
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Then it was on to the Paiute Trail.

In places it was loose enough to keep your attention.



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Then you're back to wanting cruise control as one rides past Sevier Lake (Dry).



There are places that are little used, and your track gets a little hard to find.

What a great road to have all to yourself.





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I'm guessing that many of you reading this have been here. It is all that remains of the town of Hamilton, Nevada.



Those tracks you are looking at in these pictures are a piece of history. They are part of the Lincoln Highway built in the late 1920s. It was the first transcontinental road running between Central Park in New York City to Hyde Park in San Francisco. I felt like a piker riding through there on a modern motorcycle. I couldn't imagine what an adventure it had to be in a 1920s car.



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The picture below was one that surprised me the most. I haven't driven many times through McDermitt, but I never envisioned that the mountains to the east held the beauty they did.



From the looks of the rut I don't think I was the first on this part of the trail.

The day's traffic.



The coming of the coastal mountains.



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When I find a road like this to ride my smile is almost too big for my helmet.



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Close enough to the coast that one could smell the ocean.



The beach on Heads State Park in Port Orford, Oregon, at the end of the Transamerica Trail.