

Destination Unknown ON A VICTORY CROSS COUNTRY

With a sumptuous 2010 Midnight Cherry Victory Cross Country patiently poised, the nagging question is.... where to go? Factoring in a few pit stops, breakfast, lunch, even an hour sight-seeing I draw a radius on the map of twelve hours to...Destination Unknown. Never, in my wildest dreams could I have imagined a journey into the paranormal and surreal, to portals into a world of shapeshifters, goblins and...Brothels?

Taking this iron butt approach, the initial route to destination unknown will be on super slab dodging cagers. Northern California? Been there done that, Interstate 10 east to Arizona, also familiar terrain but what's this arc through Utah? Probing the highlighted perimeter I scrutinize each and every town in its path. Salt Lake City, Provo, Soldier's Summit, Helper and Price are all direct hits. These were *never* on my radar before, so this is intriguing. It's winter and Utah gets weather so I'll be packing clothes, toiletries, a Nelson-Rigg rain-suit, even a 1st Heat electric vest. The new Victory Cross Country has the largest cargo capacity in its class (21 gallons) and I use every drop. Everything for a week's trip including water, snacks, street shoes, lap top, camera and even a tripod fits into the massive saddlebags.

FOUR STATES, TWELVE HOURS, 737 MILES

Kick stand up at 7: am with Missing Persons blasting the 40 watt stereo system, cruise control on and I own the road. Interstate 15 to Las Vegas begets plenty of time to ponder this new Cross Country. In this author's opinion (here's where the mag puts in the disclaimer that it's just MY opinion) Victory makes America's best touring motorcycle, The Vision. Scrutinizing every detail of this *new* touring Victory I will be a very tough critic but that's why this journey is so apropos. Esthetically the Cross Country and Cross Roads is modern, stealth fighter-like yet simultaneously more traditional. The new Victory cruisers now squarely target Harley's Street Glide and Road King. Traveling hundreds of miles through arid desert requires a modicum of creature comforts. Amenities like XM radio or iPod, the possible leg positions of a cleverly designed floorboards and engine guards. Plush, comfortable seating and efficient fairing aerodynamics, the Victory Cross Country seems at home on such journeys but more importantly, where is *my* home on this journey?



396 miles into the unknown and I arrive in St. George Utah, time to take a



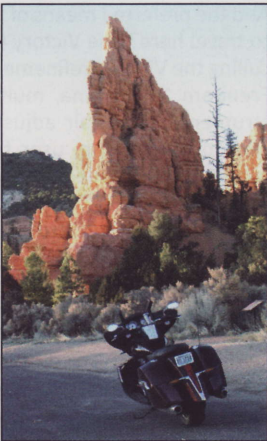
serious break, eat lunch and ruminate. What better place than the Seven Wives Inn to consider exactly where I'll sleep tonight. Avoiding swirling, sucking big city vortexes, Salt Lake and Provo are ruled out. Soldiers Summit, Helper and Price squarely hit the perimeter. Soldiers Summit reveals a ghost town, population zero, neighboring Helper has a hotel, so I immediately book a room, it's the *perfect* destination unknown, no one else was going there.

The terrain changes dramatically, Utah's high desert is filled with mysterious Hoodoos and Buttes that loom like gothic spires harboring watchful gargoyles. Washington bureaucrats refused Utah's admission into the union because having multiple wives was a federal offense. It wasn't until 1897 that America's 45th state finally renounced the practice and statehood was granted, 50 years after California! This terrain is down right spectacular and the comfortable ease with which the Victory Cross Country in fact crosses the country becomes apparent. Interstate 70 jags easterly to the 10 north towards Helper. The final stretch is arduous but 110 watt high beams light the way. 737 miles, twelve hours in the saddle and destination is surely known...bed.

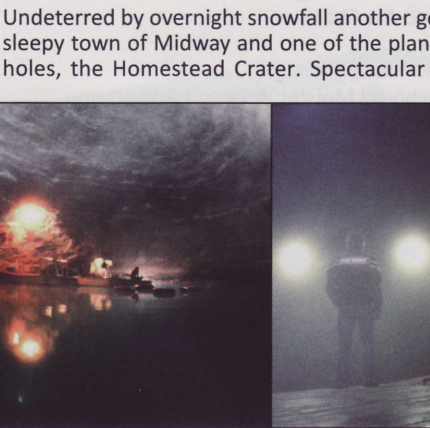


THE BROTHELS OF UTAH

Enjoying a day of recuperation I find Helper to be an amazing city. The most liberal, non-Mormon in Utah, it seems Helper has always been a wild place with most of its five Hotels operating as Brothels until 1974. On April 21, 1897, Butch Cassidy robbed the Pleasant Valley Coal Company in nearby Castle Gate and stayed in Helper the day before. Nowadays Helper hosts a yearly arts festival, Butch Cassidy Outlaw car & motorcycle show and in the future, a film festival. The owner of The Utah Hotel and the Balance Rock Café suggested I stay in their rooms where they house visiting artists during the summer at the Helper Art Workshops. Recently renovated, the Utah Hotel is an historic building; in fact, the entire commercial district is on the National Historic Registry, even boasting a geological feature, Balance Rock. Downtown literally hasn't changed for 100 years. Currently though, Helper is experiencing a renaissance and the former Hotels of ill-repute are being renovated into art studios and living spaces. There are plans to renovate the historic Strand Theater to its original glory. The Rio Theatre, a fully equipped and professional stage currently hosts performances. Home of the Western Mining & Railroad Museum Main Street Helper is right out of a movie set. The days of the Private Club are gone and new bars serve up shots and serious mixed drinks. Utah's Wasatch Brewery makes a dark beer called Devastator that's 8% alcohol and their Polygamy Porter "Why Have Just One" motto proves this ain't your daddy's Utah. Helper is a rider's paradise centrally located for day trips. We discussed planning a Save the Strand Theatre motorcycle rally, featuring classic biker films like Easy Rider and The World's Fastest Indian, I even met a resident actor Morgan Lund who had a part in it, but that's another story.



PORTAL INTO THE ABYSS



Undeterred by overnight snowfall another geological site takes me to the sleepy town of Midway and one of the planet's most unusual swimming holes, the Homestead Crater. Spectacular vistas of the snow covered Wasatch Mountains cradle U.S 6 north. Although the sun warm's the asphalt, melting away any snow or ice the air temperatures are just above freezing. Toss in a 75 mph wind chill factor and a heated electric vest is mandatory. 1st Heat's vest will keep you warm at temperatures in the 20's and works wonders, plus the prototype Cross Country fabric lowers are incredibly effective. A 55-foot-high "calcite" dome houses an ancient, mineral rich hot spring. The geo-thermal crater rises on the grounds of the Homestead Resort near Wasatch Mountain State

Park. Over 10,000 years old, the native Anasazi Indians were lowered by rope from a hole at the dome's top into the healing 96-degree water. Today, visitors enter through a 110-foot tunnel bored into the dome's porous rock wall above the water line. Take a dip in this geo-thermally heated crystal-clear crater and gaze down 65 feet at mineral deposits that grace the chamber's sides. Hot steam rising in the chilly air and eerie illumination depict a strange portal to a stygian abyss. The Sidetrack Café in adjacent Heber City is a must stop for lunch. The food is fantastic, coffee excellent and baked goods to die for, try the Dream Bar.

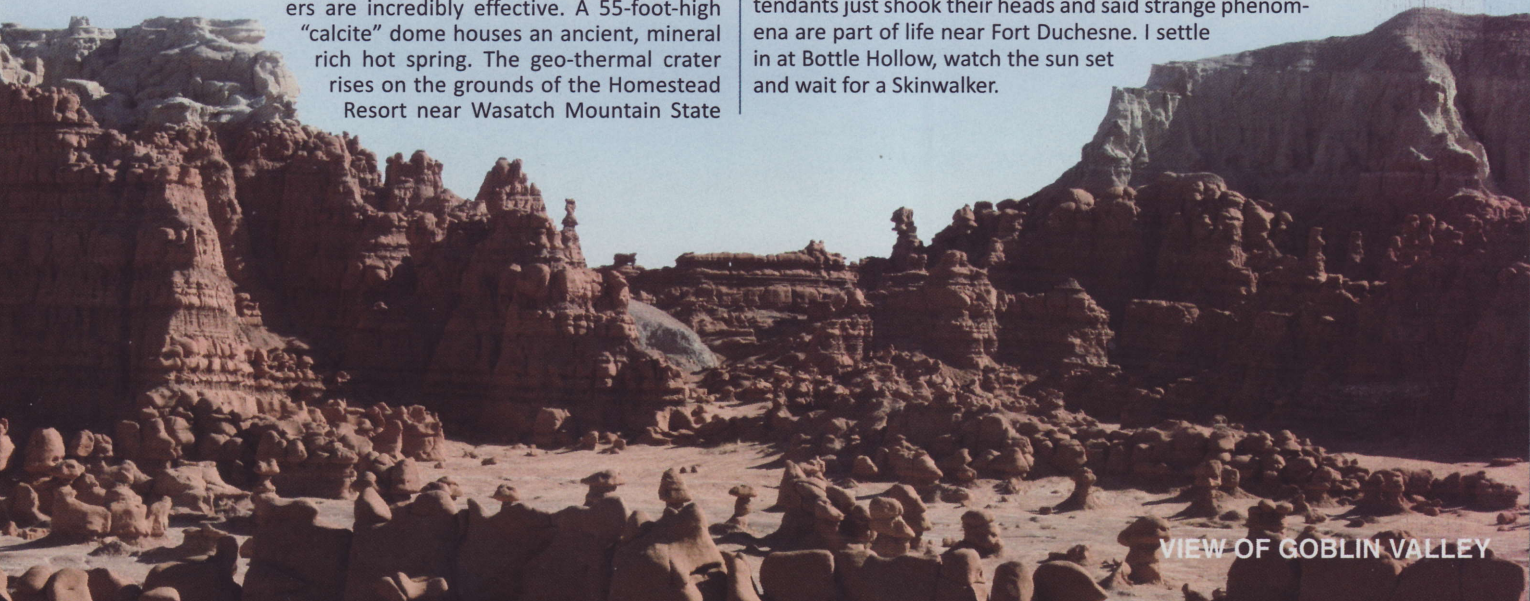
PATH OF THE SHAPESHIFTER

Back at the Utah Hotel, I spied a bookshelf and chanced upon tattered copy of the book *Hunt for the Skinwalker: Science Confronts the Unexplained at a Remote Ranch in Utah*. Who would have known that only 2 hours away lies one of the most enigmatic, scientifically researched paranormal hotspots in America – Skinwalker Ranch. In Uintah basin, near Fort Duchesne, it's reported at least half of the residents have seen weird things in the sky, flying saucers and zigzagging "ghostlights". A sacred place the Ute Indian tribe (where Utah derived its name) dare not set foot. Their oral history is replete with strange creatures and bizarre sightings. Indian lore refers to some of these beings as Skinwalkers and shapeshifters. Destination unknown keeps getting better and I need to ride there.



Its Friday the 13th, I'm traveling Highway 191 (formerly Highway 666 re-named by the superstitious) to Skinwalker Ranch. This curvaceous, well maintained asphalt ribbon carves through Indian Canyon for 36 miles. Hunt for the Skinwalker states that the property butts up against Bottle Hollow and it's my only chance for a view of the ranch. I meet a group of Ute Indian woman who tell me everybody sees mysterious things in this area.

One woman spoke of her grandfather who worked the adjacent ranch and saw a wolf the size of a small car. Another woman told of bizarre ancient petroglyphs depicting alien-like creatures and orbs in the sky in nearby Hillcreek, sacred tribal land where only Ute Indians are allowed. In fact, everyone from the waitress at Kody's Roundup Café to the gas station attendants just shook their heads and said strange phenomena are part of life near Fort Duchesne. I settle in at Bottle Hollow, watch the sun set and wait for a Skinwalker.



VIEW OF GOBLIN VALLEY

The National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS) sealed off the ranch for research and for six years to study the aberrations. It's here that an entire team of researchers watched in awe as a bright door or portal opened up in the darkness and a large humanoid creature crawled out and it is here that cattle and dogs were mutilated, obliterated or simply disappeared. Witnesses from highly accomplished scientists to law enforcement personnel have documented a mind-boggling array of unusual activity. With camera at the ready every passing satellite or gust of wind becomes the approaching unknown, it's real easy to scare yourself here...and time to leave.

GOBLINS, HOODOOS AND HARLOTS

The ride back home reveals the magnificent diversity of Utah's terrain. This landscape is constantly changing costume like a Harlot seducing a suitor. A shifting spectrum of

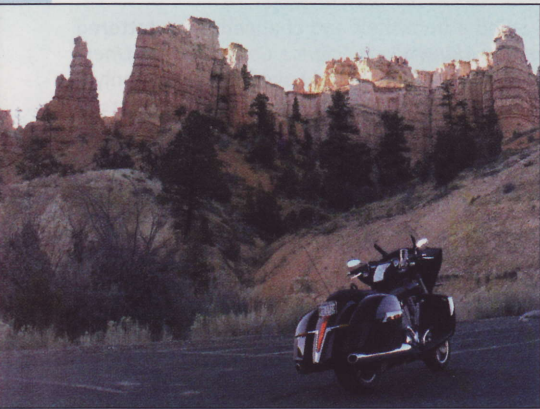
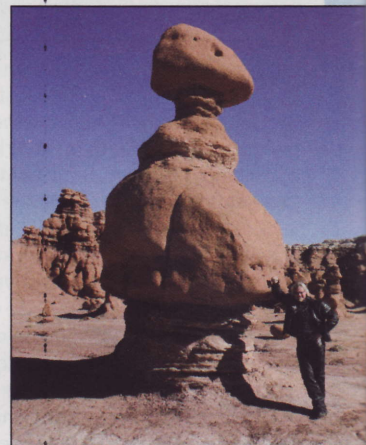
light turns the apricot colored hoodoos of Goblin Valley to rose, then magenta. An ever changing molten palette of hues evolves before your eyes. **"Hoodoo" is defined as a. One that brings bad luck. b. Geology, A column of eccentrically shaped rock, produced by differential weathering.** Utah is laden with Buttes and Hoodoos and one can't escape the gaze of these mammoth sentinels guarding their sacred terrain.

Continuing westward on SR 24 to Scenic Byway 12 south is considered one of Americas most scenic roads. **In a state known for its scenic drives this 62-mile stretch may arguably be the most attractive drive in the nation.** The list of amazing destinations in Utah is overwhelming. Dinosaur Diamond, Bryce and Zion National Park, The Arches National Park, Balanced Rock, The Wave, Waterpocket Fold to name only a few. Over 70 percent of the land is either Bureau of Land Management (BLM), national or state parks, and motorcycles gain access at half the price of cagers. Bewitching, surreal, exalting, how many superlatives can one declare of this wondrous place and how did I miss this before now?

And the preferred means of transportation to travel here? The Victory Cross Country, culling the Vision's refinements of a robust Freedom 106 engine, multi-function instrument cluster, air adjustable suspension, plush seating, user friendly cruise control and seamless audio integration. The Victory Cross Country embraces the thrill of curves and thrust of acceleration yet disappears beneath you, allowing the rider to coalesce with the passing panorama.

With even lower seat heights, more cargo capacity and stunning styling, Victory once again proves you can make the best...better.

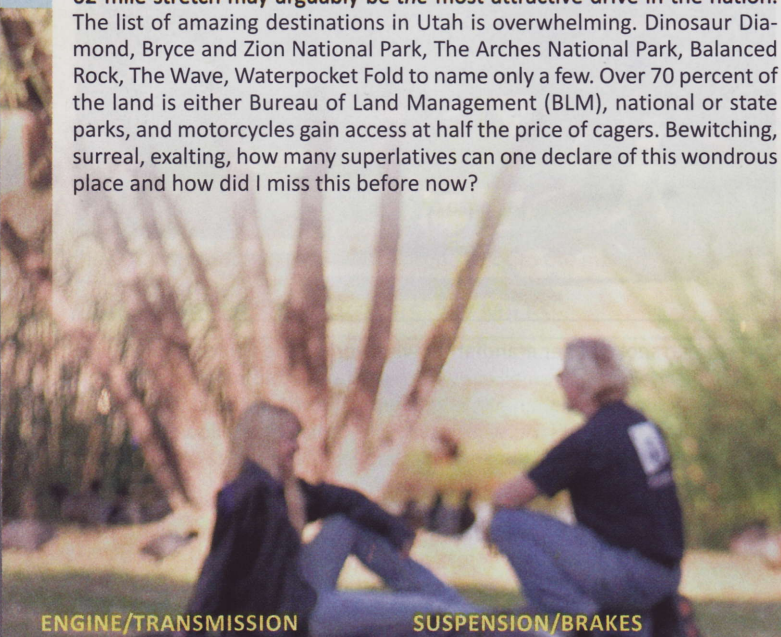
This journey began as destination unknown, lines on a map, following the wild wind for five days and 1,800 miles. Utah is mysterious, itself a geological shapeshifter, this surreal terrain lures riders through remarkable landscapes. Each new road painting another grand panoramic expanse, solitary yet sultry, she is a lonely lover luring prey to her lair. From the otherworldly portals of Skinwalker Ranch and Homestead Crater to Balance Rock and the Hoodoos of Goblin Valley, we are all traveling to Destination Unknown on this mysterious blue ball...together.



RIDING IN STYLE:

- Helmet** – Shark EVO
- Communications** – iMC Camos Bluetooth 2.0 system
- Jacket** – Victory Force w/Thinsulate & CE armor
- Gloves** – Feildsheer Highways
- Vest** – 1st Heat Electric Heated Vest
- Pants** – Harley Davidson Kevlar reinforced jeans
- Full Leather Over-Chaps** – Badd Ass Chaps
- Boots** – Harley-Davidson
- Rain Gear** – Nelson-Rigg Storm Rider
- Under Wear** – Alpinestar's Technical Moisture Wicking top/bottom

STORY: GARY MRAZ, PHOTOS: RON SINOY, GARY MRAZ



ENGINE/TRANSMISSION

- Engine Type - 4-stroke 50° V-Twin
- Displacement - 106 ci / 1,731 cc
- Bore x Stroke - 01 x 108 mm
- Valve Train - Single overhead camshafts with 4 valves per cylinder, self-adjusting cam chains, hydraulic lifters
- Fuel System - Electronic Fuel Injection with dual 45mm throttle body
- Fuel Capacity - 5.8 gal / 22 ltr
- Primary Drive - Gear drive with torque compensator
- Clutch - Wet, multi-plate
- Transmission - 6-speed constant mesh
- Final Drive - Carbon Fiber Reinforced Belt

SUSPENSION/BRAKES

- Front Suspension - Inverted cartridge telescopic fork, 43 mm diameter, 5.1 in 130 mm travel
- Rear Suspension - Single, mono-tube gas, cast aluminum with constant rate linkage, 4.7 in/120 mm travel, air adjustable spring
- Seat Height - 26.25 in / 667 mm
- Dry Weight - 765 lbs / 347 kg
- Front Brake - Dual 300mm floating rotor with 4-piston caliper
- Rear Brake - 300mm floating rotor with 2-piston caliper
- Front Tire - 130/70R18 Dunlop Elite 3
- Rear Tire - 180/60R16 Dunlop Elite 3

