

Goodbye Mormons, Hello Sin!

Saturday, November 12th – Sunday, November 13th

Ok, so I scheduled a night in Vegas, but let's be honest and note that the only sinning I had planned was checking out the arts district and probably drinking too much. Still, I left Utah on Saturday morning, took back roads briefly into Arizona, and then on to Nevada and the Valley of Fire! Oh, and Las Vegas.



Valley of Fire

I've driven through Valley of Fire before, you can (and should!) take a long detour off the main highway, drive through the park and along the ever shrinking Lake Mead (climate change: scary). So of course I did it again, this time heading even further south through Boulder City as some guests in Hurricane told me to check it out. I contemplated hiking

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around the amazing red rocks in Valley of Fire, and took a very brief walk from the visitors center before deciding my body was still shattered after the lava tube adventures. So, butt-hiking it was; you get a couple pictures as I staggered a few steps away from the bike at some parking lots.



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Valley of Fire State Park

Not pictured is the tarantula I saw crossing the road as I drove into the park. I swerved around it and tried not to get too excited and run off the road. Even seeing the little guy (and it was likely a fella) just striding about was super cool. It turns out this is the end of their mating season, where the males cross great distances (a ranger said up to 50 miles) to find a mate.

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Out of Valley of Fire, view from the side of 167.

Do you know what makes me squeal like a leeeetle girl with happiness even *more* than seeing a trantula? Seeing creosote. I love that scrubby shrub so much! I'm serious. I get giddy, it's weird. If you cup your palm around a leaf cluster and breath onto it you can convince the plant to breath back and get that lovely creosote smell. It also gets weird looks from the other tourists.

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Anyhow, eventually I made it to Boulder City, which was jam packed with people. I got the impression it was a popular weekend destination from Vegas and Sunday afternoon meant basically just an enormous traffic jam so I moved on quickly.

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Las Vegas from the Arts District.

My Airbnb for the night was right next to the “Arts District”, between the Strip and Freemont Street. Unfortunately my headlight had burnt out in the past day or so and I checked in and then scrambled to find a place that had one in stock. The folks at EuroCycle did and I blasted over to them as the light faded. They had it waiting and, despite closing shortly, were totally game to install it for me. They were cheerful, helpful and I came away feeling great about the experience and not having to drive home with only my high-beam on. It was a quick encounter, but a good one.

Oh, and the drive home. I forgot how brutal the traffic is on the 15 trying to get onto the Strip in the evening. Huge lines of stopped traffic in one lane, people blasting by a lane over; it’s gross. I made it back safely and then walked into the arts district, unfortunately too late to visit the Arts Factory which seems like the artistic anchor there. As far as art

areas go, it's underwhelming. I'd really been hoping there'd be more going on, but it feels really underdeveloped. Keep in mind, most arts areas don't show a lot after 7pm on a Saturday, but it was hard to even identify much. Still, they had a fancy cocktail joint and I ended up at Re-Bar which is a genius little stuff-shop (you can buy cool old furniture, various taxidermy, etc.) which is also a bar. I have to imagine the amount of stuff sold goes up in direct proportion to how much beer they serve. Fun and smart!

You get a picture of none of that, I don't take pictures in bars for a variety of reasons, instead here were two of my faithful helpers for the night I was there.



"Your hand appears to be uselessly hitting that black plastic square. Might I suggest a better use for it?"

The next morning I was up and headed out of town. The Rock and Roll marathon was scheduled to make a mess of things that same day, but I avoided any problems and headed

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to Primm! Last stop before I get off the highway and cross into the Mojave Desert. I'd decided I was going to stop in Primm and get a 2 gallon gas can. There's only one gas station between Primm and my destination of Twentynine Palms, with 140 miles between them. That'd be cutting things mighty close and I had no idea if the famous Roy's in Amboy carried premium fuel nor whether they'd run out (which happens).

Except that nobody in Primm sells gas cans. I checked in multiple shops and no dice. I was going to do the whole illegally-use-empty-gatorade-bottles trick, but once you buy gas there you can't use the same credit card again in the near future, likely to prevent such escapades. The gas stations are also a total zoo on Sunday morning, and I didn't bother to try and stand in a giant line for my nefarious schemes. So I headed off into the desert and hoped for the best.



Mojave Desert

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We must be in lower elevations, no Joshua Trees here just CREOSOTE. It's so crazy beautiful out here.



Mojave Desert – slightly higher elevation.

On the to do list: come back and explore the Mojave some day. See King Clone (an over eleven thousand year old creosote clone colony, I'm just saying), watch my skin catch fire in the summer, etc. This time I just scooted through, obeying the posted speed limits or going slower because I was vaguely terrified about fuel.

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Roy's at Amboy

Roy's was open! They had premium gas! They're cash only (no problem for me)! They don't let you pump it yourself because it's a crazy old fashioned contraption that none of us cell phone wielding kids know how to operate! Unless you're on a bike, then he operates the pump and hands you the nozzle! Also their normal fuel was \$5/gallon that day (more for mine) so the guy running the place kept trying to talk people out of buying it. Still, I was so relieved I was happy to pay it. Amboy is really, really out in the middle of a whole lot of empty road. Given that I could keep my speed around 55mph I think I might have been able to coast into Twentynine Palms without the stop, but I'd have likely been into my tiny spare fuel and it'd have been close.

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Matza!

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I saw a beat-up sign about an art show and asked about it. “Yeah, a bunch of french artists showed up and did all that. Some people call it art, I call it a pile of junk.” Unfortunately, said junk was behind a fence so I didn’t get to check it out.



Graffiti Rock

Eventually I made it into Twentynine palms, still feeling flush with petrol and in love with the landscape around me. I was here to explore Joshua Tree and I’d rented a whole unit from Airbnb. Just a tiny place, but it was all mine and I spent a glorious week in the desert.

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Home for the week in Twentynine Palms.