

Our first stop was [The Liar's Lodge](#) in Buena Vista (pronounced BYOU-NA VEESTA), Colorado a dreamy little stretch of land along the rugged Arkansas River. Since we'd flown in that day from New York, picked up and packed our bikes at the Aurora BMW dealership (we'd shipped our bikes out a week earlier...hey, did you think we actually rode all the way from White Plains to Colorado?? Ha! Booooringgg!) then headed down the road, we didn't arrive into Buena Vista until late. Tired and hungry, I was immediately greeted with 50 yards of gravel driveway to negotiate. NOT my favorite type of road surface but, I did fine and kept the rubber side. Little did I know, but for the next two weeks that was going to be the norm for most road surfaces.

The Lodge was about a mile out of town and after a long day riding, a short walk into Buena Vista for some yummy chow sounded just fine to us. Buena Vista is one of those places where the street rolls up around 5pm. Our hosts at Liar's Lodge had suggested our only choice for food: Quincy's (for you vegetarians, feel free to skip this bit). This place serves Colorado style chow and only one kind: beef. Monday-Thursday they serve steak and only prime rib Friday-Sunday. You do however get a choice of how large a slab of beef you want, anywhere from 6oz to the 24oz 'Belly Buster'. Along with the usual steak accompaniments and a great ale, at \$7.99, you can't beat the price and I highly recommend the place of those of you who are into red meat. For others, best bring along a kind veggie burrito or head to Denver or Boulder.

Although we'd be back for a couple more days in Buena Vista, the next day we jumped on our bikes and were off to the 'Switzerland of America': Ouray (pronounced: You-Ray). Steve had heard from our hosts at Liar's Lodge, that there was a beautiful lake on our way – Lake Taylor – 'just over Cottonwood Pass'. The winding road was paved all the way to the top – piece of cake! We stopped just at the top of the 13,000 ft. pass. That's where the paved part stopped and 13 miles of unpaved, hard-packed gravel began, all the way – downhill – to Taylor Lake, on the other side of the mountain. With our helmet communicators on, Steve coached me on the curves as we descended and that too would be another one of my riding accomplishments during this two-wheeled summer adventure.

Ouray, Colorado is one of the most astounding places I've ever seen. Nestled in a San Juan Mountain valley, just 10 miles 'over the hill' from Telluride, between two giant – and visible – waterfalls (Box Canyon and Upper Cascade), with plenty of hiking opportunities. If that's not enough, Ouray has amazing Hot Springs. We were lucky enough to stay at the [Box Canyon Lodge](#) (and the only place in town with a paved road leading to it), which features 4 private, outdoor Hot Spring tubs. After another long day on the bike, soaking in a relaxing hot springs tub while looking up at snow capped mountains was absolutely breathtaking. Life is good! We spent several days in Ouray, and then hit the road again for SE Utah.

Haven't these people heard of pavement or asphalt?

We stayed at this very secluded place, just 15 miles over the Colorado border: [Mt. Peale Lodge](#). It was so quiet there you could hear a car coming 10 miles away. Our cabin on the property had an outstanding view of Mt. Peale and from the expanse of our side porch, we watched herds of deer, leap across the open fields. Ain't no Starbucks here, baby. It was quite magical.

The temperature soared into the low 100's. Even in June, this was a heat wave. Lucky us! So, any outdoor activities had to be done before 1pm.

Steve & I took off for several side adventures of Arches National Park and The Needles area of Canyonlands National Park. I felt like a cowboy on my trusty steed riding along the river into Canyonlands one morning. The high mesas and purple hoodoos of distant rock formations took me back to a place in time where life was wild and amazing at the same time. In some ways, this place still is.

Okay, I could go on and on about our adventure in Colorado and Utah. Suffice it to say, there was more than one misadventure too – including the time when we had to ride through sand to the only gas station within 40 miles, which I somehow managed successfully, as I watched Steve flail erratically in front of me before he dumped his GS into a dune. Yeah, okay, I was freaked out but, Steve was fine and so was his bike. Fortunately, there was plenty of sand. – NNNN EEEE WAYZZZ – I could prattle on endlessly in minutia about this adventure, so I'll wrap this piece up with a few bullet points:

- Riding 25 miles, two-up on a dirt road to a remote mountain lake – and nearly running into a giant semi out in the middle of nowhere
- Home-cooked, intimate meals at Mt. Peale
- Hiking to Delicate Arch (I drank ½ gallon of water)
- Hiking 5 miles in Canyonlands – I thought I'd hiked 10 miles! – drank another ½ gallon of water
- Passing through Bedrock, Colorado – the temperature was 105!
- Riding into – and out of Telluride – ackkkk! It was like being in Soho
- Riding along the San Juan River into Utah
- Sunrise over Canyonlands

In March, and after the nasty-cold winter the NE part of this country usually coughs up, a trip to Mexico sounded pretty darn good. I hadn't been to Cozumel in nearly 4 years and looked forward to sun, fun, some snorkeling, and a lazy stroll or two through the town's plaza. That whole idea would come to a screeching halt due to two words: Cruise Ships.

'Seems Cozumel is now the 3rd largest cruise ship destination in the world. Apparently, in my four-year absence, the Mexican government had completed their decade-long overhaul of the docks at this Caribbean seaport in order to accommodate gi-normous cruise ships and the ensuing gi-normous cruise ship folks from places like Bemidji, Minnesota and Canton, Ohio. Cheap knick-knack kiosks and stalker-y vendors had replaced the lazy plaza and quiet, dusty side streets of Cozumel. Steve and I spent about a ½ hour in that area, then avoided it like the plague. Thankfully, the place we were staying was a few avenidas away and in the older, less trendy part of town. Regardless, I did promise less verbiage and more bullet points, here's a few attesting to the great time we had and why Cozumel is still one of my 'nearby' and favorite destination:

- The secret cove at the top of the Palancar reef – I walked into the water to snorkel; and where Steve had his first scuba lesson (the sea life was incredible!)
- The taco joint we discovered on our last night in Cozumel
- Walking to the Faro (lighthouse)
- The giant pigs on the south side of the island
- The VW we rented that steered like a truck (no wonder there's so few accidents)
- The trip to Xel Xa, Tulum, and the Mayan Rivera
- The endless warmth and blue skies
- Palapas Amaranto – our cozy li'l palapa on one tropical, rainy night (nuf sed!)