

LIFESTYLES OFF THE BEATEN PATH

JPFreek

ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



October / November 2007 • Issue 5 • Volume 2

Tales of a Texas-Size Jamboree

**2008 JEEP LIBERTY KK REVIEW • ADVENTURA IN COSTA RICA • RED ROCK CHALLENGE KJ-STYLE
OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS • CAMP JEEP 2007 • PROJECT TJ • BUCKSKIN GULCH
CLIMBING THE TOOTH • TRAIL OF THE SUMMER • 24 HOURS OF EXHAUSTION**



The environment, and all of the gifts that we have on this great planet, has become an increasingly important subject that has caused passionate response from all sides of the spectrum. Concern about decreasing carbon emissions and moving forward with alternative sources of energy has dominated the political landscape. Within this discussion the use of public and private lands for off-highway vehicle use has become an increasingly volatile subject that continues to provoke legislation limiting this type of recreation.

Several weeks ago, I took a trip to the pine-ensconced terrain of east Texas to enjoy some time with my TJ Rubicon on the trails. The importance of this issue became solidified in my mind. I began to truly recognize why there has been such a large lobby requesting limited use of public and private lands for OHV use. As an avid adventurer, I care greatly about the right of fellow adventurers to enjoy our natural surroundings; however, I am also a passionate "environmentalist" who believes that responsible use of the natural world is vital in providing our children and grandchildren the wherewithal to enjoy the future. While I was in east Texas, I witnessed a number of OHV enthusiasts who seemed to care very little for the principles of responsible land use, and it became my duty to articulate to them that through their actions (or lack thereof), they were providing fodder for those who want to limit OHV use altogether.

It is vital that we, as off-highway enthusiasts and adventurers, use our resources in a responsible manner as we only have one planet to enjoy and share. Fun can be had by leaving the places you visit the same way you found them. As long as small groups of enthusiasts show a lack of regard for responsible recreational use, the off-highway industry as a whole will continue to be "black marked" by those who want to limit this type of recreation.

I encourage each of you to consider how you can better enjoy our great planet with as minimal impact on our resources as possible. As Gandhi once said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." That change must start now before it's too late.

Frank Ledwell
Editor-in-Chief



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October and November: '2007 Outdoor and Digital Seminars' sponsored by Outdoor Photographer. Hone your photographic skills at one of several two-day events in San Jose, California; Denver, Colorado; and Chicago, Illinois. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.opseminar.com/>

October 2-7: 'North American XJ Association Fall Fling 2007' in Moab, Utah. An annual gathering of NAXJA members at the Mecca for Jeep ® vehicles. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.naxja.org>

October 6-7: '8th Annual Off-Road Expo' in Pomona, California. Advanstar's flagship exposition for all-things Jeep and off-highway. For more information, please visit:

<http://ca.offroadexpo.com/orepomona/v42/index.cvn>

October 7: 'Warrior Challenge Adventure Race' in Ashland, Nebraska. Situated along the Platte River, this USARA National Qualifier Adventure Race will feature two courses: a 4-6 hour short course, and a 6-10 hour long course. For more information, please visit:

http://www.bicycling.com/event_detail/0,6747,s1-2-----1878556,00.html

October 11-14: 'Expedition Trophy 2007' in Arizona. A PREMIER off-highway challenge that tests closed course driving skills, navigation, special tasks, and team trial events. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.expeditionswest.com>

October 12-14: 'Appalachian and French Lick Jeep Jamborees' in Murphy, North Carolina and French Lick, Indiana. Join Jeep ® Jamboree USA for a weekend of wheeling and adventure. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.jeeppjamboreeusa.com>

October 13-14: '24 Hours of Moab' in Moab, Utah. A 24-hour mountain bike race at the Mecca of mountain biking and off-highway adventure. For more information, please visit:

http://www.imba.com/news/news_releases/06_07/06_26_team_imba.html

October 13-15: 'Mojave Road 3-Day Adventure' Needles, California. A 3-day excursion along the Mojave Road Wagon Trail. A fun weekend for the entire family. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.4x4training.com/tours/mojaveroad.html>

October 13 & 14: 'Lance Armstrong Foundation Livestrong Challenge' in Austin, Texas. The LAF's signature event that features a 5k run/walk, as well as cycling options of 10, 40, 60, & 90 miles with all proceeds benefiting the Lance Armstrong Foundation. For more information, please visit:

<http://austin07.livestrong.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=219584>

October 14: '2007 New York City MS Bike Tour' in New York City, New York. Ride your bicycle car-free through the Lincoln Tunnel and Manhattan. Benefits the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.nycmsbiketour.org>

October 19-21: 'Superlift Fall Gilmer 4xAdventure' in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Held during the spring and fall of each year, the 4xAdventure trail rides are the marquee events of the Superlift Off-Road Park in Hot Springs, AR. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.superlift.com>

October 26-28: '1st Annual Salton Sea Jeep Jamboree' in Salton Sea, California. Join Jeep ® Jamboree USA for a weekend of wheeling and adventure. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.jeeppjamboreeusa.com>

October 27: '10th Annual Jeptoberfest' at Ocala Speedway in Ocala, Florida. Sponsored by the Ocala Jeep Club of Florida, this one day festival is the largest Jeep-only show in the southeast. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.ocalajeepclub.com/>

November 3-4: 'Blue Mountain Jeep Alliance Annual Toys for Tots Charity Run' with location to be announced. Join the BMJA for a fun weekend of Jeep ® wheelin with all proceeds to benefit Toys for Tots. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.bmja.org/>

November 9-10: 'Warren Miller's "Playground"' at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Presented by Jeep ®, Warren Miller's "Playground" is the largest action sports film on the planet. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.berklee.edu/events/detail/516>

November 16-18: 'North American Grand Cherokee Association Grand Slam Northwest 2007' in Liberty, Washington. A weekend of wheeling with NAGCA in the Pacific Northwest. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.nagca.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=31361>

American Expedition Vehicles (AEV) to Pick Up Significant Amount of Product Line from Recently Closed Nth Degree Mobility

Missoula-based American Expedition Vehicles (AEV), long a favorite supplier of aftermarket parts to the Jeep off-road community, will soon be adding the highly-regarded Nth Degree Mobility suspension lift kits to its expanding product line.

Off-road enthusiasts have bemoaned the recent closing of Nevada-based Nth Degree Mobility, provider of innovative and expertly engineered long-arm and short-arm suspension lift kits, among other products. Now AEV announces it will pick up a "significant" portion of Nth Degree's inventory and product line, with plans to continue manufacturing and distributing those products "in the near future."

AEV asks for patience as it moves over inventory and equipment, but promises the same commitment to quality and innovation that Nicole and Jim Frens provided Nth Degree Mobility customers for years.

"It's really unfortunate that Nth Degree had to close its doors. Nth Degree has been a major innovator in the suspension industry and has developed a near cult following with good reason," said Dave Harriton, President of AEV. "Because this has happened so quickly, we are still trying to determine how long it will take for us to incorporate their products into our system. It is our goal, however, to have most of the existing suspension line back on the market along with several new products in the near future."

"Most of the line will remain unchanged, although we will be simplifying and redesigning some of the existing components to make it easier for our dealer network to stock and for our users to install," Harriton said.

AEV itself has been an Nth Degree customer, employing its suspension and skidplate products on AEV conversion vehicles. AEV will integrate Nth Degree's design, engineering, and development operations into AEV's Missoula, Montana facility while warehouse, distribution, and manufacturing will be moved into AEV's Walled Lake, Michigan plant. Watch for further announcements on plans for former Nth Degree products at www.aev-conversions.com.

Regarded as the premier innovator in the Jeep aftermarket, as well as the only supplier of fully-validated, all-steel stamped parts and accessories for Jeeps, AEV continues a rapid expansion of its offerings to the dedicated Jeep community.

In the past year, the company has brought forth a number of products for the popular new Jeep Wrangler (JK), including a stamped front bumper, hood, corner guards, wheels, and skid plates, among others. The company's fully-integrated "Brute" conversion kit has electrified the off-road community, providing all parts needed to convert a TJ Wrangler into a custom AEV Brute pickup.

Several AEV vehicles will be featured at the 2007 Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show in Las Vegas, Oct. 30 - Nov. 2, including a fully-equipped AEV 4-Door Wrangler (JK) with a custom Kicker Audio sound system; a four door Wrangler Unlimited with a 525HP 6.4L HEMI will also be featured.



EarthRoamer® XV-JP First Camper to Cross the Rubicon!

The EarthRoamer XV-JP, a revolutionary new self-contained, go-anywhere camper designed and built by EarthRoamer, has successfully completed the Rubicon Trail in the California High Sierras.

The Jeep Rubicon Unlimited based EarthRoamer XV-JP did not disappoint on its namesake trail. With its aggressive 33" mud terrain tires, ultra low 5.13 gearing, locking differentials and stout skid plates, the EarthRoamer XV-JP camper has gone where no camper has gone before.

EarthRoamer's co-founder and Chief Designer Bill Swails was happy to report that the queen size bed in the electronically expandable Loftop™, the large on-board refrigerator powered by a built-in 80 watt solar panel, and sanitary facilities including toilet, sink and shower with hot and cold running water, worked great too. "It was a fantastic experience" said Swails. "The XV-JP worked exactly as we designed it, safely traversing one of the most difficult off-highway trails in the country, if not the world. This is the first time a self-contained, fully enclosed production camper has conquered the Rubicon."

Initial testing, which has taken the XV-JP proto-type from its home base in the mountains of Colorado through the jungles of Central America, the deserts of Moab Utah, and now the Rubicon Trail, is complete and production has begun.

- To learn more about Earthroamer and the soon-to-be-released Earthroamer XV-JP vehicle, please visit:

<http://www.earthroamer.com>



"The Alps" Nominated For Best Theatrical Program at Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival

MacGillivray Freeman Films' original giant screen production The Alps was nominated as one of three finalists to compete for the Best Theatrical Program Award at the prestigious 2007 Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Winners will be announced October 4 at the festival's Awards Ceremony in Jackson Hole.

"We are honored to have been selected as a finalist in the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival competition," said director Stephen Judson. "The Alps is designed as a moving, family story of courage and perseverance, focusing on one man's epic struggle to reconnect with the father he lost as a boy. This intensely personal story is played out in one of the most majestic places in the world—the Swiss Alps—which inspired the film's dramatic, sweeping cinematography. We aimed to celebrate both the rugged power of the mountains and their fragile beauty."

The Alps was released to giant screen theatres on March 9, 2007 with more than 30 exhibition s scheduled this year. Narrated by Michael Gambon and featuring songs and music by rock legend Queen, The Alps follows the inspirational quest of mountaineer John Harlin to climb the Eiger's sheer North Face in honor of his father who died climbing the same peak 40 years earlier.

The Alps continues to open in giant screen theatres around the world. It is the seventh film to be released under MacGillivray Freeman's Great Adventure Film® brand, a series of films based on real-life adventures in remote locations that celebrate discovery of the natural world.

For more information or to see the film at a location near you, please visit: <http://www.alpsfilm.com/en/frame.cfm>



Jeep® is Back in Uniform: New Military Version of Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Reports for Duty

Iconic off-roader returns to its storied roots with J8 multipurpose model primarily developed for military use – but also suitable for civilian government applications

Auburn Hills, Mich. - Chrysler LLC unveiled the Jeep® J8 multipurpose vehicle at the 2007 Defence Systems & Equipment International (DSEi) military trade show, making the legendary vehicle available for reenlistment in active military service.

"Jeep vehicles made their original debut in 1941 for military duty, and have built their reputation with more than 65 years as the world's benchmark for off-road capability and versatility for civilian and military vehicles," said Thomas Hausch, Vice President – International Sales, Chrysler LLC. "The new Jeep J8 marks the brand's return to vehicle production for military and civilian government use – the same capability that makes the Jeep Wrangler and Wrangler Unlimited famous also makes the Jeep J8 a truly multipurpose vehicle."

With the all-new 2007 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited as the starting point, Jeep engineers increased its capability and versatility. The frame of the Wrangler Unlimited is reinforced for increased ruggedness and to allow greater payloads – up to a maximum of 1,339 kg (2,952 lbs.). Axles, brakes and suspension components are engineered specifically for more demanding military and civilian government use, including utilizing a leaf-spring suspension system in the rear. The J8's Command-Trac® four-wheel-drive system allows maximum versatility and performance in both on- and off-road conditions.

The Jeep J8 is powered by a 2.8-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel engine that produces 118 kW (158 hp) and 400 N•m (295 lb.-ft.) of torque, providing towing capability of up to 3,500 kg (7,716 lbs.). The engine is mated to a five-speed automatic transmission. The J8 also features a unique air-intake system with special filtration and a hood-mounted snorkel that enables the J8 to ford water up to 762 mm (30 in.) deep and operate in sandstorm conditions for up to five hours.

The Jeep J8 is available as a two-door with an extended pickup bed for personnel or equipment transport, or a four-door multipurpose vehicle. It may be produced with numerous vehicle-body and seating configurations in either right-hand or left-hand drive.

While not designed for front-line combat operations, the Jeep J8 is fully armour capable and excels in a variety of duties ranging from command vehicle to troop/cargo carrier, ambulance, communications vehicle and other duties – also making it suitable for civilian government applications. Tow eyes and heavy-duty bumpers allow the Jeep J8 to be easily transported by airplane or helicopter.

The Jeep J8 will be produced in a Chrysler LLC joint-venture facility in Cairo, Egypt, and will be available beginning in spring 2008.



Mopar® Offers New Chrome Grille for the Popular Jeep® Wrangler and Jeep Wrangler Unlimited

- The Chrome Grille from Mopar® allows customers to personalize their Jeep® Wrangler to make a bold statement
- Provides a bright complement to any Wrangler body color for a stylish exterior
- The chrome grille features precise fit and long-lasting good looks

Center Line, Mich. - Mopar®, the Chrysler LLC's original equipment parts manufacturer, announced it offers a new Chrome Grille for the Jeep® Wrangler and Jeep Wrangler Unlimited. An Authentic Jeep Accessory from Mopar, the chrome grille kit also includes a Jeep emblem, hood seal and fasteners.

Installing in less than 20 minutes, the chrome grille has a durable and long-lasting finish. Designed and engineered to meet all Chrysler O.E. corrosion protection specifications and standards, the chrome grille also doesn't affect the Wrangler's cooling system performance.

"Our new chrome grille, an Authentic Jeep Accessory from Mopar, dresses up the Jeep Wrangler so it's sure to turn heads on the trail or at a red-carpet event," said Chris Cortez, Senior Vice President – Global Service & Parts, Chrysler LLC. Cortez added, "Our factory-engineered Jeep accessories are designed as well as performance and safety tested to provide compatibility in function, fit and finish."

The U.S. Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) for the chrome grille (P/N 82210558AC) is \$299 for the new JK Wrangler, and \$173 (P/N 82208626AB) for the TJ Wrangler.

Mopar offers a complete package of chrome accessories including front and rear tubular bumpers, fog lights, wheels, tubular side steps, taillamp guards, fuel filler door and exhaust tip.

The chrome grille from Mopar is available for purchase and installation at Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge dealerships across the country. Mopar accessories are covered under Chrysler's 3-year/36,000-mile New Vehicle Limited Warranty or Mopar's 12-month/12,000-mile Limited Warranty, whichever is more favorable to the customer. These warranties are serviced by Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge dealerships.

Visit www.mopar.com for a full line of authentic accessories from Mopar.



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2008 JEEP® SHOWCASE

Expanding the Jeep® Brand in 2008

Text and photos courtesy of Chrysler Media Services

On June 7, 1941, the U.S. Army received its first shipments of the Willys MA, the rugged 4x4 vehicle that came to be called the "jeep." This predecessor to today's Jeep® Wrangler would prove so vital to the war effort that General Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed that we could not have won WW II without it.

One can only imagine what Ike might have said had there been seven Jeep vehicle models at his disposal.

"The seven Jeep models in our lineup today are the most available to retail consumers at one time in the 66-year history," said John Plecha, Director – Jeep Marketing and Global Communications. "With the introduction of the all-new 2008 Jeep Liberty mid-size sport-utility vehicle (SUV), Jeep offers customers the freshest, most capable and widest range of sport-utility vehicles under one brand in the industry, bar none."

Jeep vehicles have produced some of the most passionate owners in the automotive industry. Some can be identified by their ownership of multiple Jeep vehicles. Some can be identified by their regular attendance at Camp Jeep and Jeep Jamborees, the family-oriented, owner-only, weekend off-road driving events held across the country every year. Some can be identified by their abundance of Jeep gear – branded products from clothing to baby strollers – that is available at Jeep.com and retail stores. They all have one common trait: the ability to go anywhere and do anything in their Jeep vehicles.



2008 Jeep® Wrangler

Built on the successful, original Jeep® formula of body-on-frame chassis, solid front and rear axles, removable doors, fold-down windshield and the most capable drivetrains on the planet, the 2008 Jeep Wrangler remains without peer as a vehicle that can blaze its own trail – on a mountain or to the mall.

Offered in three models – Wrangler X, Sahara and Rubicon® – the 2008 Jeep Wrangler is tough, versatile and simple, achieving best-in-class off-road capability while delivering a true open-air driving experience. Jeep Wrangler does not wander from the brand's coveted core values of freedom, adventure, mastery and authenticity.

While legendary for its off-road prowess, the 2008 Jeep Wrangler doesn't demand sacrifices in the name of capability, providing safety and convenience features, interior space and comfort, refinement, power and open-air fun.

The 2008 Jeep Wrangler lives up to its more than 65 years of heritage and accomplishment by offering benchmark off-road capability, versatility, power, on-road refinement, comfort and space.

- To read more about the 2008 2-Door JK Wrangler, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



2008 Jeep® Wrangler Unlimited

The 2008 Jeep® Wrangler Unlimited is a fun, capable convertible with room for five adults. It's a practical vehicle with enough cargo capacity for everyday tasks, and it's the most capable off-roader on the planet." said George Murphy, Senior Vice President – Global Brand Marketing, Chrysler Group. "Jeep Wrangler Unlimited is appealing to customers who always wanted a Wrangler but needed even more space and versatility."

By adding 20.6 inches to the standard Jeep Wrangler's 95.4-inch wheelbase, the 2008 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited's wheelbase topped out at 116 inches. The added length allows for a larger rear seat and significantly more occupant and cargo room.

Unlike the four-wheel-drive-only configuration of the standard Jeep Wrangler, the Jeep Wrangler Unlimited is also offered in two-wheel drive. However, all Jeep Wrangler Unlimited models use the same tough body-on-frame construction, full-framed or half doors, exposed hinges, fold-down windshield and innovative removable convertible tops.

- To read more about the 2008 4-door JK Wrangler, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



2008 Jeep® Grand Cherokee

For 2008, Jeep® Grand Cherokee adds an all-new 4.7L V-8 engine that delivers a 30 percent increase in horsepower, a 10 percent increase in torque, and improved fuel economy of more than 5 percent than the engine it replaces. The 2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee features a refreshed interior and exterior design and a host of innovative premium amenities; including one not found on other full-size SUVs on the road today – SIRIUS™ Backseat TV.

Also new on the 2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee are high-intensity discharge (HID) auto-leveling headlamps, as well as ParkView™ Rear Back-up Camera (with or without navigation), ParkSense® Rear Park Assist System, SmartBeam® headlamps, rain-sensing wipers, memory seats and mirrors, iPod connectivity, and 18-inch chrome-clad aluminum wheels.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee also features three new safety and security technologies for 2008: Hill Descent Control, Hill Start Assist and Trailer Sway Control.

- To read more about the 2008 Grand Cherokee, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html





2008 Jeep® Liberty

All-new from the ground up, the 2008 Jeep® Liberty remains true to its legendary 4x4 heritage by offering two Jeep Trail Rated® four-wheel-drive systems – Command-Trac® and the all-new Selec-Trac® II. On-road ride and handling have been improved and refined with the new independent front suspension, new five-link rear suspension and rack-and-pinion steering.

The Liberty's exterior has been redesigned, and takes on a more rugged, classic Jeep look that is sure to captivate the attention of current Jeep Liberty owners and broaden its consumer appeal. Inside, cargo and storage space increases and seat comfort improves. Making its world debut is the new Sky Slider™ full-open canvas roof, an industry-exclusive; giving the Jeep Liberty that "Only in a Jeep" open-air experience. Remote start, rain-sensing wipers, memory seats, radio and mirrors, and express-up/down windows are added to the vehicle's ever-growing list of available features and options. There are two models – Jeep Liberty Sport and Jeep Liberty Limited.

- To read more about the 2008 Liberty, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



2008 Jeep® Commander

The 2008 Jeep Commander adds an all-new 4.7L V-8 engine that delivers a 30 percent increase in horsepower, a 10 percent increase in torque, and improved fuel economy of more than five percent compared to the engine it replaces. Also new on the Jeep Commander for 2008 are a wide array of innovative technologies including the all-new SIRIUS™ Backseat TV, MyGIG™ Multimedia Infotainment System, Hill Descent Control, Hill Start Assist and Trailer Sway Control.

New for Jeep Commander and standard on 4x4 models equipped with Quadra-Trac II® and Quadra-Drive II® is Hill Descent Control (HDC). Operational in the "4WD Low" position, HDC provides downhill assistance at a controlled rate of speed. By means of electronic brake control, HDC supplements the gear reduction and engine braking that a traditional mechanical low-range transfer case provides. For ease of operation, Jeep Commander's HDC is activated and deactivated automatically, after the HDC button is engaged, as the system senses changes in topography. The system works whether the vehicle is in forward or reverse.

Another new feature for Jeep Commander is Hill Start Assist (HSA). Standard on all Jeep Commander models equipped with Quadra-Trac II and Quadra-Drive II, this feature allows the driver time to transition from brake to throttle to achieve a smooth launch on a grade. The system will hold brake pressure for two seconds upon the driver's release of the brake pedal. The ABS system decreases wheel pressure in response to increasing throttle to provide a smooth launch.

Also new is Trailer Sway Control, which helps to reduce trailer sway and provides improved trailer stability and increased towing safety.

- To read more about the 2008 Commander, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



2008 Jeep® Patriot

The 2008 Jeep® Patriot combines the packaging and interior flexibility of a sport-utility vehicle with the performance, handling, fuel economy and price of a compact car or small pickup. Safety features, such as standard side-curtain air bags and standard Electronic Stability Program (ESP), add to Jeep Patriot's tremendous value.

New Jeep technology gives Patriot more capability than any other vehicle in its class. Jeep Patriot is available in three drive configurations: front-wheel drive, Freedom Drive I™ (a full-time, active four-wheel-drive system with lock mode) and the Freedom Drive II™ Off-Road Package (a full-time, active 4x4 system with low range that provides true Jeep 4x4 Trail Rated® capability).

The Trail Rated® Jeep Patriot sits 1 inch higher than non-Trail Rated versions and meets Jeep off-road capability requirements for traction, water fording, articulation, maneuverability and ground clearance. The Off-road Package's 17-inch wheels and OWL tires contribute to the Trail Rated Patriot's 9 inches of ground clearance, 29.6-degree approach angle, 34.2-degree departure angle and 23.3-degree breakover angle. Trail Rated Jeep Patriot models also have additional body sealing and high-mounted drivetrain vents to support 19-inch water fording capability. The Jeep Patriot's body and chassis were developed and tested over numerous rugged off-road terrains to meet the requirements of the enthusiast Jeep customer.

All Jeep Patriot models include standard brake traction control, driver-controlled three-mode ESP, Brake assist, Electronic Roll Mitigation and Anti-lock Brake System (ABS) with rough-road detection.

- To read more about the 2008 Patriot, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



2008 Jeep® Compass

The Jeep® brand continues its expansion into new territory with the 2008 Jeep Compass — a compact sport-utility vehicle (SUV) that delivers fun, freedom, utility, excellent fuel efficiency and Jeep 4x4 capability at a terrific value. With Compass, Jeep continues to grow by offering an affordable, modern-styled SUV designed to reach consumers who may not have previously considered the brand.

Compact and nimble, Jeep Compass brings a new sense of adventure to the compact SUV market, combining the packaging and functionality of an SUV with the performance, handling, fuel economy and price of a compact car or small pickup. Compass and its stable-mate Patriot are the Jeep brand's first front-wheel-drive-based products with fully independent suspensions for comfortable on-road ride and handling and fun-to-drive characteristics.

In addition to its standard front-wheel-drive configuration, Jeep Compass also has an available full-time, active four-wheel-drive system with lock mode called Freedom Drive I™. This four-wheel-drive system features a lockable center coupling, giving Jeep Compass drivers the ability to handle rough weather conditions and low-traction surfaces.

Side-curtain air bags, Brake Traction Control, driver-controlled three-mode Electronic Stability Program (ESP), Brake Assist, Electronic Roll Mitigation and Anti-lock Brake System (ABS) with rough-road detection are all standard on the 2008 Jeep Compass.

- To read more about the 2008 Compass, download the official specification sheet from Chrysler at:

http://www.jpfreek.com/news_events/index.html



The staff of JPFreek Adventure Magazine would like to dedicate this issue in the memory of Ben Adair, the father of regular contributor Matt Adair. Ben passed away the night of August 26 at his home near Seattle, peacefully in his sleep. He led a rich life in every respect, from racing European sports cars in the 1960s, exploring all over the West in one of his numerous Toyota Land Crusiers, to chasing solar eclipses all over the world, most recently the Libyan desert. In between adventures, he was a leading pioneer in the semiconductor industry with multiple patents and products credited to him.

He will be missed by all who knew and loved him.



Though never a Jeep owner, Ben epitomized the spirit which we strive to capture. Here he is in 1982 in his 1964 FJ45W. He was climbing up Tiger Mountain near Seattle to better see the eruption of Mt. St. Helens...truly a "freak."

24 HOURS OF EXHAUSTION



Both Ian and Bryan looking on and spotting as I maneuver into position for a very tough rock section.

Words and Photos by Matt Adair
Additional photography by the Timber Tamers and Tracey Charles Fitch

For twenty years the Camel Trophy was the ultimate display of what 4-wheel drive vehicles could accomplish. From 1980 to 2000, Land Rovers and Range Rovers, in every conceivable spec, traversed some of the most daunting and challenging areas on earth for weeks at a time. Another hallmark of the events was the emphasis on teamwork and mental challenges, in addition to the seemingly impossible terrain. It was an incredible test of man and machine, with teams from all over the world vying for the trophy.

In 2000, Land Rover pulled their support from the event, and for all intents and purposes the Camel Trophy ceased to exist. Coincidentally, that same year there was a Land Rover enthusiast who had been following the Camel Trophy and thought it would be a great idea to put on a similar event himself, though on a smaller scale. It was with this goal that Oregonian Doug Shipman started the Team Trophy Challenge.

The TTC was similar to the Camel Trophy, though focused more on creative thinking, teamwork and both physical and mental endurance. Every year the TTC grew and grew, challenging every kind of vehicle imaginable from Land Rovers to Toyotas, with early model Broncos, Suzukis, and every kind of Jeep® vehicle imaginable.

After six years of amazing events though, Doug had enough and threw in the towel. As he put it, "It's become too much work and more of a job." Luckily enough for me, there was another group ready to step in and put on the event for 2007; the Timber Tamers Off-road Club. The Tamers are a small but very active Washington-based 4x4 club who are as much dedicated to having fun on the trails as keeping them open for future generations to enjoy. The goal: Keeping public land public, as it was.

I became aware of the event last January, and my primary Jeep club, PNWJeep, was fielding two teams out of the total of twenty, but needed one more rig. Perfect. A good friend, Ian Foley, served as my navigator/co-driver/riding mechanic, and he proved invaluable. Jesse Connor and his white 4-dr XJ would be the other half, and Bryan Grey would fill the role as his navigator.



The Timber Tamers used Doug's template for the competition, though adapting it along the way to their own ends. Don't think there was any outright plagiarism, though: Doug signed up to experience the hell he'd been putting wheelers through for years but at the last second, the death of his brother-in-law a week earlier prevented his participation.

FRIDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 07-

After drinking several pots of coffee and running my head under cold water, we started packing the Jeep. And we kept packing...and packing. I've never had the Jeep so full, and it let me know. Around sharp corners my tires were rubbing against my flares! After meeting up with another PNWJeep member, John Herrick who would be competing on the other PNWJeep team, we headed our way across the Cascade Mountains. On the way over Snoqualmie Pass (the geographical divider between Eastern Washington and the "Wet" side of the state), we stopped at an unmanned truck weigh station: My Jeep weighed in at 5100 lbs, about 1500 more than stock!

When we arrived a few hours later at the rendezvous/event campground, it was snowing. This was pretty unusual for Washington State even though we were at an elevation over 4000'. Once the rest of the teams arrived, we made our way to the tech inspections. One of the rules the Tamers enforced was a maximum width of 76" from the outside of each tire. As I barely squeaked through the cones they had set up, I was glad I spent the money narrowing my front high pinion Dana 44 front axle...it was close!

These rules were meant to ensure that no tube buggies would be competing...street legal rigs only. This also kept the Forest Service happy, who were instrumental in making the event happen. After tech, we all made our way back to our trailers (we had two enclosed toy haulers for sleeping) and retired early; the drivers meeting the next morning at 7am came way too quickly.

SATURDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 07-



Ian fixing the two PNWJeep teams breakfast before the competition.

We awoke early, about 5:30am, in order to have a hot breakfast and (lots of) coffee before going to the drivers meeting. Ian stepped up to the plate and fixed two huge pans of bacon and eggs (two dozen), in sort of a country scramble with onions. It may have been the best

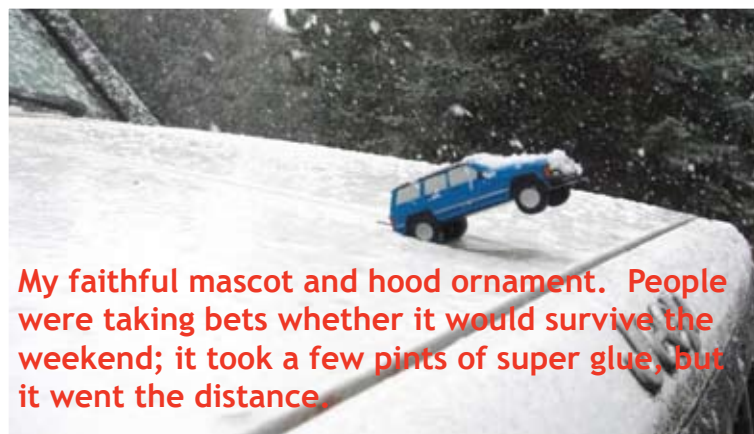


My Jeep in the morning sun before the event; it was a VERY cold morning.

breakfast I've ever had, but as soon as we'd finished it was time to head to the drivers meeting where we would discover our running order and rules of the event.

Up until this point, the Timber Tamers had been very tight lipped about the challenges we would face. We really had no idea what we were in for. And even after the meeting, we didn't know very much. Around 8:45am, we were handed an instruction packet and told, "Go!"

Uh....we quickly tore open our instructions and found a baffling combination of GPS coordinates and pictograms. I quickly dubbed them hieroglyphics as they bore no resemblance to any language I knew. The name stuck. We finally found our bearings and tore off down a trail we thought might be the right one. It wasn't, and we were forced to back track and start from scratch. This was the beginning of a long day for Team 31.



My faithful mascot and hood ornament. People were taking bets whether it would survive the weekend; it took a few pints of super glue, but it went the distance.



(Left) One of the events required towing one non running vehicle through a tight and twisty train.

(Below) This challenge proved problematic for many teams



As the day wore on we gained familiarity with the directions and began to feel more confident with ourselves. We hit the first checkpoint/challenge early in the day; our task was to re-seat the bead on a tire and inflate it to between 20 and 25psi. If our tire was higher or lower than the prescribed pressure, we were disqualified. It was timed, points being awarded for the shortest time. We would run into similar exercises during the event.

Another of the major challenges that morning was a timed rock-crawling event. There were five different lines ranging in difficulty from "easy" to "barely doable" to "get the helicopter," with points being awarded for the more difficult. Both rigs didn't have to do the same line, but once you started one you were committed to it. If the rigs didn't finish, zero points were awarded. Both vehicles had to complete their line in 15 minutes.

After careful consideration, we decided to send Jesse up a very difficult line called "The Crack." As the name implies, it's a very deep crack that requires you to straddle them in order to conquer. Sounds easy until you factor in the steep angle of the ascent. As you climb, all you can see is sky; spotters play a huge role. After a couple attempts and near event-ending rolls, it was deemed too icy and slick to be possible. Jesse backed down and followed me up one of the easier lines. Though denied by "The Crack," we completed the challenge in the allotted time, gaining us some points.



(Left) Jesse on The Crack. The rocks proved just a little too slippery that morning.

(Right) Going up the "easy" line after bailing on The Crack.



We completed the first of four daytime "loops" around 1:00pm. This was due to some directions we couldn't reconcile with the road we were on. We wasted valuable hours back-tracking and second guessing ourselves. Finally we finished, but this error both in navigation and judgment (not simply giving up after the first few missteps and cutting our losses) would end up affecting us throughout the rest of the competition.

The next event was a timed rally where an average speed must be maintained while following vague directions and GPS coordinates. To make things tough (hell, anybody can average a certain speed over a certain distance), the Timber Tamers placed orange buckets with numbers on them along the side of the road between checkpoints. We were required to stop and put a poker chip with a number on it in the corresponding bucket, thereby screwing up whatever speed average you were trying to maintain.

After completing this event, it was well into the afternoon and we were barely halfway done. Also worrying was our fuel situation; both Jeeps were just over a quarter tank and we didn't have spare gas with us. There was gas back at our camp, but not enough for all of us and there was a penalty for returning there. The idea was to be completely self-sufficient. We began our third loop and quickly found ourselves behind another team, two nice early model Broncos. All of a sudden they stopped and people piled out; the lead rig exploded his rear Ford 9" axle. The entire housing was shattered and the driveshaft was still attached to part of the mangled pumpkin. It was the end of the road for them, and they were blocking the narrow trail.

With low fuel lights staring us in the face, we decided to make the most of our delay and bend the rules. The organizers were very specific about not being allowed to return to camp, but they never said we weren't allowed to drive the 30 or so miles into the nearest town, Ellensburg. We decided that with at least another 16 hours remaining before the end of the race, this was the only way to stay in it. We got some strange looks as we did a NASCAR-esque pit stop and tore out of the gas station.

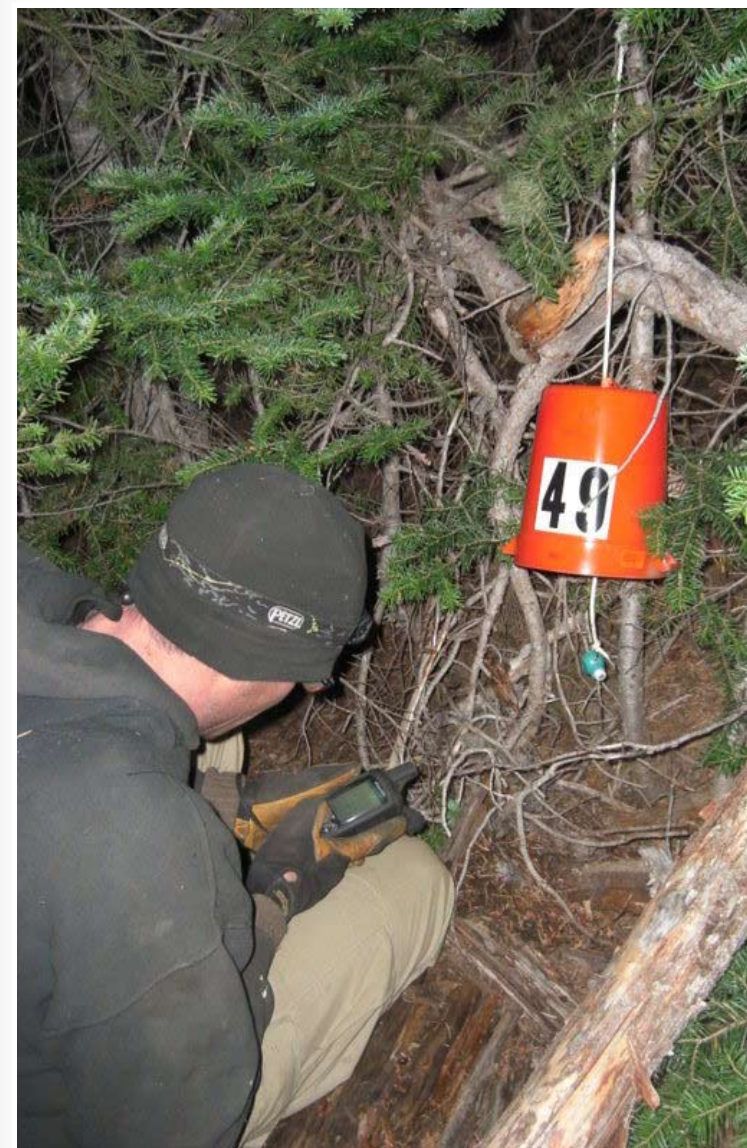
It was nearly dark as we made it back to the trail and promptly got lost going down the wrong trail. Cracks were beginning to show in our foundation; our lack of sleep and the day's exertions were becoming evident in our decision-making and attitudes. Ian expressed it succinctly, "I'm not spending all fawking night looking for fawking buckets in the woods!"



Jesse showing off his undercarriage (and mangling a cone) before I winched him off. He probably could have made it but there was a huge drop off just off to his passenger side.



(Left) Climbing down a steep and technical rock face before getting to one of the actual challenges. (Right) Jesse creeping down the same rocks, getting a little tippy.



Ian resetting GPS coordinates after discovering a fiendishly hidden flag. Note the unique hole-punch dangling.

Around 7:30pm the sun was starting to set and remind us of our time constraints. We had to be back at camp by 9:00pm in order to qualify for the night section; the Tamers were very clear that if both vehicles weren't there by then, you would not be competing in the rest of the event. After completing a couple more challenges, including a first aid event in which one of our team members was supposed to have a broken leg, we abandoned the third loop and raced down to camp.

We arrived with two minutes to spare.

Again, we were handed a packet of GPS coordinates and told "Good Luck!" Here's how it worked: We were given a total of eight latitudes/longitudes that we had to find. We were warned that the locations were

not situated right on the roads and that we'd have to do some hiking. Once we found the initial GPS coordinate, we had to locate an orange bucket. Each bucket had a number on the outside and a hole punch (with a specific shape for each bucket) dangling from a string. After locating one, we would punch a shape in a score card with corresponding numbers. Each matching punch was worth points.

From the initial bucket, we were given a compass heading and a distance in feet where the next bucket was...or was supposed to be. Without fail, the buckets were obscured behind trees, down embankments and even covered in heavy snow at the highest point of 6300'. We quickly marked bucket after bucket off our master list, making great progress. It was rewarding to know we were doing so well, and the physical activity kept us alert and awake. Finally, we had found all the buckets we could and wearily made our way to the finish line; we officially finished the competition at 4:30am after 23 hours of hard driving and several hundred miles.

After a few hours sleep we made our way to the award ceremony and a hot breakfast of biscuits and gravy. As well as a lot of coffee. We knew after our rough start we wouldn't be on the podium. The other PNWJeep team had their own problems, including John Mathews exploding an alloy HP D44 shaft and a general lack of enthusiasm for the night exercises. Nonetheless, they came in a solid 4th. What surprised us more was our own finish of 6th, due mostly to a highest overall night section score. A total of seven teams failed to finish.

After all the buckets were found, the points tallied, receipts added up and sleep recovered, the event was a resounding success for all involved. Despite the exhausting and often confounding effort, everybody on the PNWJeep teams is excited for next year and already comparing notes on ways to improve our performance.



Team 31 after completing tech inspection and getting their official number signs.

For more information about the Team Trophy Challenge, Timber Tamers, and PNWJeep, please visit:

<http://www.teamtrophychallenge.com>
<http://www.timbertamers.com>
<http://www.pnwjeep.com>





2008 JEEP LIBERTY KK

Text by Will Morgan of JeepBrokers.com. Photos by Will Morgan and Chrysler Media Services.

In 2002, Jeep® introduced the original Liberty KJ to the mid-size SUV market as a replacement for the very popular Cherokee XJ, and in a short time it became a popular, all-around family vehicle. The new design would be the first Jeep® to offer independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering, as well as side curtain airbags. Many came to use the vehicle in various ways and over time, the aftermarket support grew to include rock sliders, simple spacer lift kits to solid axle swaps for guys that intended to tackle more extreme conditions. With the original Liberty selling well in over 90 countries, Jeep® has decided to up the ante with the release of the next generation Liberty; and this new version sure has evolved!



This new model has some great things to offer Jeep® enthusiasts of all ages and experience. Their new platform boasts an improved on-road ride and handling with the new independent front and five link rear suspension systems. Having had the opportunity to actually spend some time in this new Liberty, it is very impressive the change in comfort and ride. It is very exciting to experience these systems in action; it absorbs the washboards on dirt roads and increases the feel of control behind the wheel. With this new model comes the option of two "Jeep Trail Rated" four-wheel-drive systems: the Command-Trac, (a part-time four wheel drive system in which the front driveline is disengaged from the transfer case and the power is directed towards the rear wheels) and the new Selec-Trac II (a full-time four wheel drive that offers an active on-demand system that anticipates and

prevents wheel slip before it occurs). Off the pavement and on the trail is where these systems really shine. It is amazing to be able to sit behind the wheel and feel the "Hill Descent" control take over and guide the vehicle down an impressive slope, or to feel the traction control get you through cross axle situations that one can't help but wonder what they are in for upon approach. I was continuously amazed and impressed as to what this Jeep® was capable of, after it went through obstacle after obstacle from off-camber situations to cross axle sections of the trail that we had to test it on, and even more so the hill descent as well as climbing abilities and tight turning radius.

Powered by the 3.7 liter V-6 engine, this Jeep® can be purchased with a six-speed manual as standard equipment in the "Sport" model and the "Limited Edition," or available in the four-speed automatic in the "Sport" model as an option. The front axle comes as a Dana 30 in the 4WD only, and the rear is a Corporate 8.25 with a four-wheel anti-lock brake system as a standard feature on both the "Sport" and the "Limited Edition" models. With a wheel base of 106.1" and an overall width of 72.4," this Jeep® has the ability to perform well in those areas where you may need to be able to negotiate tight turns around trees, rocks, or any other obstacles that you may encounter on a weekend camping getaway.

As far as the interior and exterior design is concerned, it too has had some exciting new design features that are impressive and confirm Jeep's presence as the industry leader. The "Sky Slider" full-length canvas roof is a great idea to have as a roll back option that can allow the front and rear passengers to get the feel of the sun and the breeze on their skin, and enhance the outdoor experience of traveling in a Jeep®. The open top experience has been one of the many reasons that Jeep® owners have enjoyed their vehicles year-round in so many different environments, and for Jeep® to bring

this to the mid-size SUV market is a great idea. The "Sky Slider" is four times as large as an average sunroof, and it can be opened in a variety of positions from full forward, full rear, or any position in between with the push of a button. These are the reasons that Jeep® can continue to introduce new models and find a different fan base for each vehicle, all while gaining a larger customer base. Kudos for staying on the "cutting edge" and trying these

new ideas, and offering something to the consumer that is desired in a vehicle but not offered in any other mid-sized SUV out there.

Continuing on with the design, some of the features that consumers can look forward to in the interior would be the amazing technological bells and whistles such as the "Multimedia Infotainment System" that includes items like hard-drive music storage, real-time traffic updates, a personalized

screen saver, as well as voice and touch screen control. In addition to all of the available options, consumers are able to get SIRIUS Satellite Radio with numerous audio entertainments from music to comedy, and sports channels to suit the listening tastes of pretty much anyone. The interior is roomy and has plenty of storage compartments,

especially in the cargo area. The load floor has a great design for those instances when you have items that you don't want to put on your carpeted interior floor. It has a reversible lid that you can flip over and put your dirty items on top of, and the 4" deep storage area or the waterproof storage compartment can accommodate a variety of needs.

There are many other examples of things in the new Jeep® Liberty that I could that I could write pages about

that impressed me, and in my opinion made this another great introduction to the Jeep® lineup. It has also been a great way to follow up the original Liberty with new ideas and options that will get buyers interested in this vehicle for many of its upgrades and improvements. The add-ons that buyers have to choose from are a long list as well, with things like the remote start system (which is an item that once you have had on a vehicle,





whether you are in a cold climate for the winter or a hot spot in the summer, you'll wonder how you ever got by without it). The navigational systems that are also available in these Jeeps is another great tool, and another "How did I ever get by without it" item. With many features such as the 2-D and 3-D birds eye view of the roads, as well as multiple route calculation alternatives, navigation comes easy by monitoring the 6.5" flip down thin-film-transistor color display.

In closing, if you are a veteran of the Jeeping world or are looking to purchase your first Jeep ® vehicle, look no further than the new Jeep ® Liberty as it is well worth taking the time to check out. Once you have had the opportunity to spend a little time in the seat, you will be able to tell if this Jeep ® is right for you.



- Will Morgan is a seasoned veteran with over 20 years experience building and working with Jeep ® vehicles. Will is the co-owner of JeepBrokers.com, an online Jeep ® classifieds and review company, and he has worked with Jeep Jamboree USA and Chrysler LLC as a trail guide and staff member for a number of years. Will resides in Arizona.

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TALES OF A TEXAS-SIZE JAMBOREE

Text by Greg Machado of Jeep Tales.com
Photos by Richard Tinnell



I'm often asked, "Why would you pay \$265.00 per person, **NOT PER JEEP, Per PERSON**, to attend a Jeep Jamboree USA® event when you can wheel at thousands of other venues and events around the country for less money?" Thankfully, there are a few hundred thousand people, with combined memories from a number of successful Jeep Jamboree events going back 50 years, feel the same way that I do.

Moreover, my own wife of over 16 years has considered institutionalizing me on a number of occasions for much the same reason. She asks, "Why would you pay \$30,000.00 plus for a new 2007 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon only to risk tearing it up on the rocks? **Are you crazy?!"**



A vast overlook of only a small portion of Ink Ranch

The answer to both of these questions can be found in the historic Texas Hill Country, just outside the tiny riverfront town of Llano where off-highway enthusiasts from all over the United States gathered for two weekends of "Wheeling Nirvana" in 2007. The place we gravitated to is 1,100 acres known as the Inks Ranch. For a more precise location, the coordinates are: **30°32'53.10"N by 98°48'07.66"W**, and about 1,356 feet above sea level according to the Google Earth™ website. For those of us who have been to the ranch, we simply call this location "Roy's House." It's a gorgeous Ranch-Style home comprised of several buildings and covered patios, backing up to a spectacular freshwater pond and flanked by an enormous granite dome. From the hilltop, the views looking down on this tiny slice of heaven make the discomfort of the 7-mile dusty dirt road ride into the ranch fade away as simply the necessary price of admission.

The Inks Ranch (formerly the Moss Ranch), and the Inks Family name, have had a long and colorful account in more than one chapter of Texas History, extending back to the original Texas Land Grants of 1837. The land was given as partial repayment to family members who fought for independence from Mexico during the Texas Revolution (A more detailed history of the ranch can be heard by listening to the podcast with Roy Inks on the JeepTales.com website entitled "[Inks Ranch History](#)").

In December of 2004, JJUSA decided to part company from the former host venue to the South Texas Jeep Jamboree, the YO Ranch. The decision not to return to the YO Ranch could not have happened

at a more inopportune time. The 22-page, 5-color Jeep Jamboree Guide book for 2005 was about to go to press with a circulation of 50,000, and JJUSA and Tony & Nancy Winkler (The South Texas Jeep Jamboree Coordinators) were faced with the decision to cancel the event all together, or roll the dice on a risky plan "B."

Plan "B" was to change the name to "Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree" and announce in the JJUSA guide book, as well as on the [Jeep Jamboree USA website](http://JeepJamboreeUSA.com), that it was going to be held somewhere in the San Antonio area even though an alternate venue had not yet been decided on. For the next several weeks, Tony & Nancy's team of dedicated trail guides interviewed and surveyed a number of area ranches, looking for a location that would not disappoint past or future attendees. During the past decade, the YO Ranch had developed a loyal following and the task was to find something that could compare in size,

scope, trail variety and excitement. It was not an easy task as finding a ranch with major acreage whose owners were willing to allow strangers to "wheel" on their private property was quite an undertaking.

I'm not sure of the "how" but I do know the "who." Mr. Ray Karrick, one of the owners of Jeep Masters in Austin, Texas, found the property we would soon be calling home base. He took Tony & Nancy Winkler to the property, and they drove all over the ranch to devise a game plan for the trails. I remember being at what I think was the January 2005 San Antonio Jeep Exclusive meeting where Tony brought in aerial photos of the Inks Ranch. It was difficult to determine



Google Earth™ satellite photo
of Inks Ranch

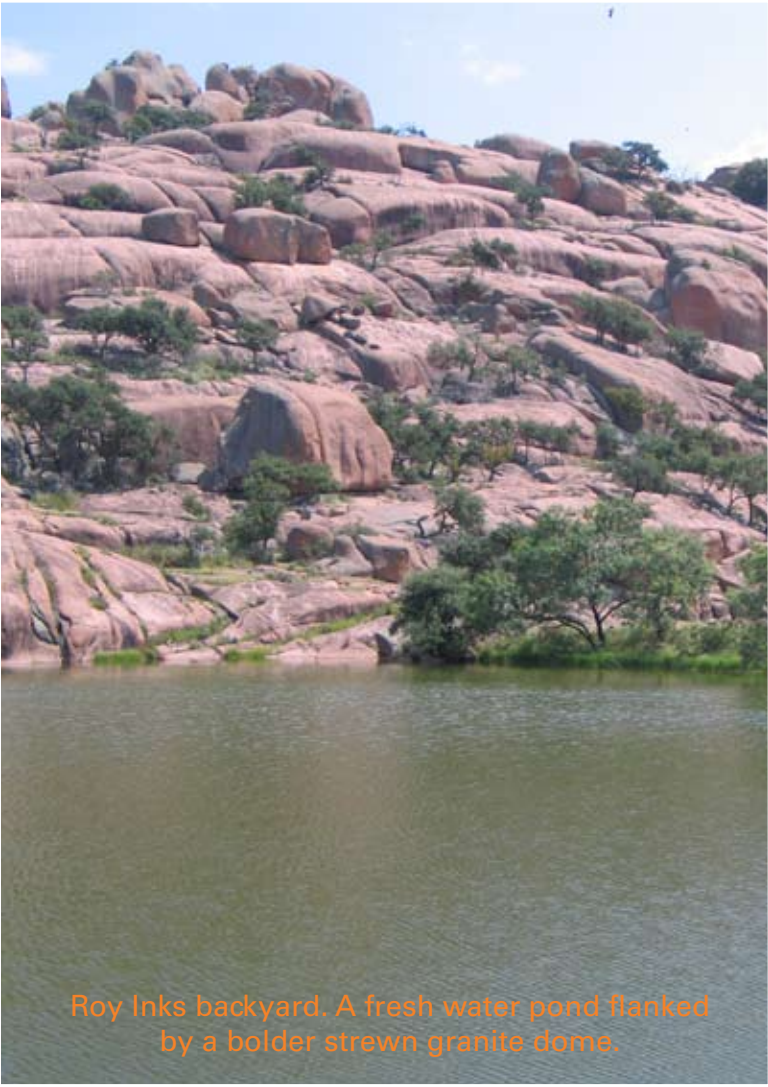
just how high or how much challenge the granite domes would offer us as we viewed the flat photos. The ranch description of only 1,100 acres also left many of us wondering how this new venue could possibly compare to the old ranch.

The San Antonio Jeep Exclusive would have less than 6 weekends to scout, mark, clear and test all of the trails for the 2005 Texas Spur Jamboree. This was not much time to complete such a mammoth task. To make matters even more difficult, Mother Nature threw us a curveball by raining every weekend in February. This made it difficult to mark the trails because the pink Texas Granite is incredibly slick to drive or walk on when it is wet. The weather had forced the trail guides to walk large sections of the path because driving was just too hazardous. Up to the weekend of the event, no one had ever driven the full length of the most arduous trail on the ranch, which we affectionately called “Moab.”

Despite all of the twists and turns this event had endured throughout its development, it was the ticket sale results that stood testament to its success. In 2005, the undisclosed location sold out in 49 days. As word of this event spread throughout the off-highway adventure community, Jeep owners were becoming more and more interested in attending this affair. In 2006, the Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree sold out in one month and one day after the tickets had gone on sale, shattering the old record by more than two weeks. A number of past attendees were shocked at how quickly the tickets had sold. In an effort to beat the trend, the Jeep owners who did not want to be left behind for the 2007 Texas Spur were eager to log on and buy tickets early; **REAL EARLY!** Apparently, a lot of folks thought the same thing because the 2007 spring event sold out in an astounding six days! By the morning of December 6th, late registrants had to be put on a waiting list. There were so many people who wanted to attend that JJUSA began to consider a solution to the influx of interest. **Perhaps a second event?**

This brings us to the 1st Fall Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree, added to the 2007 Jamboree schedule as a late entry on the JJUSA website, approximately fourteen weeks before the event. So far there have been only four JJUSA events hosted at the Inks Ranch, and now there are two more events planned for 2008. You might still be wondering why we pay so much money to attend this event, year after year. It’s difficult to put a finger on one component, but in my not so humble opinion it’s the fact that you get to work with a lot of people who genuinely care about the **paying adventure seeking customer.**

It all starts with Mark A. Smith, the founder of Jeep Jamboree USA and it works its way down through the JJUSA staff, as well as at the local level with a hand-picked Trail Guide staff. Then there is the Inks



Roy Inks backyard. A fresh-water pond flanked by a bolder strewn granite dome.

Family, who allows Jamboree attendees to visit their magnificent ranch home each year. Roy Inks thinks we are all “just a little crazy,” he says. There is a fine line between passion and insanity, and most of us straddle that line a bit too closely.

The center stage of this magnificent production is the Inks Ranch itself. As you drive through the Texas Hill Country on your way to the wheeling and camping areas, you will be amazed by views of Texas Wild Flowers. They explode into a vibrant color pallet, ranging from a waving carpet of deep purple patches set off by the Texas Bluebonnet, and contrasted by hints of bright orange from Indian Paintbrush and lightly punctuated with the soft pink of the blossoming hill country Mountain Laurel.

The Ranch has a dozen or so huge granite domes that protrude from the ground like ancient sentinels protecting the center of the ranch. On clear, cool nights (such as what we had during the Fall Texas Spur) the lack of ambient light and clean crisp air revealed a majestic light from millions of stars, and a falling meteorite show that would rival any firework display. The recent torrential rains made our fall outing as green and lush as the area was in the spring, providing plenty of nourishment to the grass for the cattle that wander the ranch freely and always maintain the right of way.

The domes are grouped together in two large masses divided by a riverbed, which winds through the ranch. The riverbed is unusual because it is comprised of billions of pea-sized pink granite gravel that are all offspring of the towering domes on the ranch. As you walk or drive across the riverbed, it’s as if you were at the bottom of a giant aquarium with the crunching sound caused by the course stone surface, and a little water to lubricate the finish. On my first outing to the ranch three years ago, I sank my previous vehicle, a 2003 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, to the axles in the river in seconds while trying to attempt a river crossing. The water was waist deep and when I had to recover the tow strap from the add-a-trunk at the rear of the Jeep, I found out just how cold river water can be in February. Aside from the domes, the ranch is covered with several species of native Oak and plenty good old-fashion Mesquite bushes, brought to Texas as a gift from herds of Spanish Goats as they migrated from Mexico in the 1920’s.

Now that you have some idea of the lay of the land, I can tell you of the seven named trails on the ranch. All but the most novice groups run their rigs on all of the trails. The guides determine the line each group will use to increase or decrease the level of difficulty for a particular set of obstacles, allowing every driver to test their Jeep and driving skills as close to the edge of the envelope as they wish.

The Trail Names are:

- **Moab**
- **Balancing Rock**
- **Waterfall Creek**
- **Watch Mountain**
- **Homestead**
- **Hunter’s Hill**
- **Roy’s Revenge**

Several of the trails have a few side diversions and obstacles you can run if you’re feeling overly courageous, though it requires a guide’s permission and supervision. Your guides will also make sure you have plenty of time to snap digital photos, and they use the C.B. radio to tell attendees about certain areas of the ranch. Kids seem to enjoy this part of the trip as much as the wheeling. The Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree is truly a family-oriented event. There may even be enough water in the creeks for children to take a quick, cool dip or even hunt for ancient Indian arrowheads.

The official Jeeptales.com JK Rubicon made its debut at the Fall Texas Spur, two days before I arrived. My buddy Joseph took my Rubicon and gear on Thursday and set up our campsite. I felt like I owed him since he had just constructed a

The official Jeep Tales JK



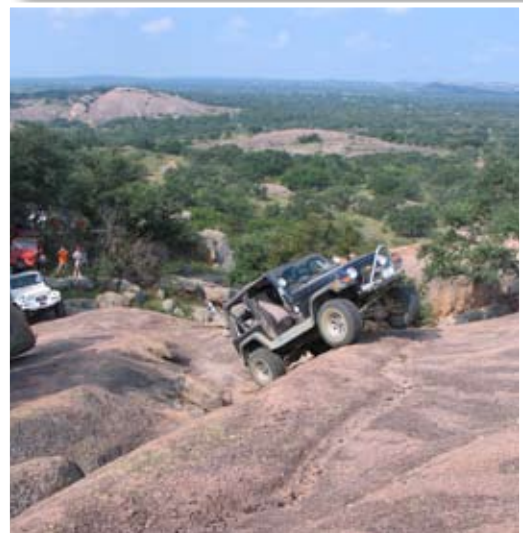
A custom steel console fabricated by JAM’s Custom Consoles for the Jeep Tales JK

new custom steel overhead console for my Jeep the week before that is used to hold my CB and a few LED switches in a convenient location. He even added a few bright overhead lights so I can find stuff in my Jeep at night. Joseph is getting ready to start a small custom fabrication business and needed a “Guinea Pig” Jeep to build and test a console for the JK model Wrangler. On Friday morning, Joseph called me and asked if we could take on another passenger. He said the rider, Richard Tinnell, was from JPFreek Adventure Magazine and needed to hitch a ride so he could see what all the fuss was about.

I had visited with JPFreek by email earlier in the year to try to get them into the spring event. Unfortunately, the event was so full that not even the press could get



The 25° uphill climb is only the 1st of many challenges on the “Moab” trail.



Lining up for "Moab's" 2nd challenge. Every Jeep got to catch a little air while spectators got plenty of photos.

in! So the JPFreek staffers were in for a treat because our first trail was going to be "Moab," named for its similarities to the famous wheeling destinations in Utah. When you approach the Moab trail, you face a shear 25° granite face dome that runs for several hundred yards until you reach the first left-hand turn. The approach is more difficult when it's wet because it's hard to gain traction on the first 18 – 20 inch "first step" in the soft dirt before the climb. Once you spin off the dirt clogs and/or mud and debris, it's smooth sailing because the pink granite surface offers as much traction as a modern-day highway. I will tell you I have driven the first climb and I have walked it; it is much easier to drive. As we reached the top, Richard and I walked most of Moab so he could snap as many photos as possible. I turned to ask him what he thought of the ranch so far. His answer was **"This place is awesome,"** and we were only 40 minutes into our day.



Around the next corner the drivers carefully cross "The Crack," a fissure inside the boulders that is 30-40 inches wide.

Once we all cleared the initial entry slope on the Moab trail, spectators, shutterbugs and drivers jumped back into their rides so we could start the more difficult portions of the trail. Although a stock Wrangler can navigate most of the twists and turns of the trail, a small lift kit and some larger tires, as well as more durable front and rear bumpers, come in handy. My JK is equipped with a 2.5" budget boost Tera Flex lift kit, and I've upgraded the tires back to the Goodyear MT/R 285's. I like to air down to about 12psi for added traction. What I'm most thankful for is the Stubby Front [Shrockworks](#) Bumper and Sliders. The short bumper allowed my Jeep a much more aggressive approach angle for the more arduous off-camber climb that would come next.

Spotters and eager photographers positioned themselves along the rock squeeze into a small drop just before the first off-camber climb. Most everyone



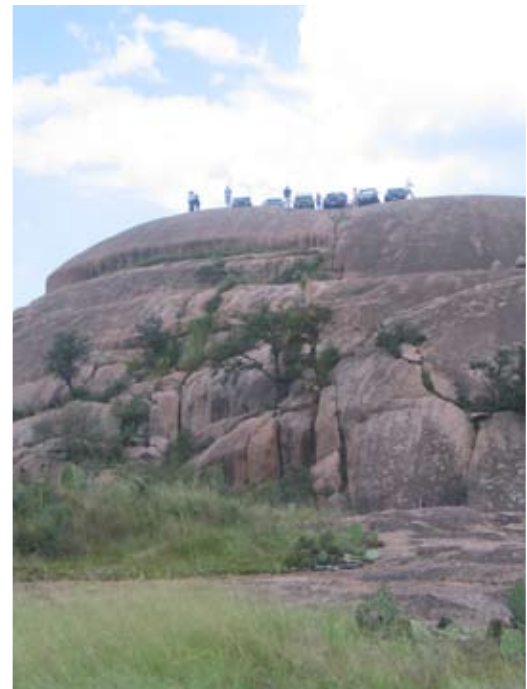
The 15 foot climb up the "V" has claimed many license plates, bumpers, and axles, but also makes a hell of a photo

in the group had an opportunity to catch enough air in their Jeep to nab a photo worthy of framing. Just as drivers caught their breath from what was an unnerving maneuver for first timers, the massive pitch caused by the off-camber climb moved into a hard right turn, often a three-point-turn or more. This came in preparation to cross what we call "The Crack," a fissure inside the massive boulders that ranges from 30" to over 40" in width, depending on the line you use to cross. Fortunately, there were spotters everywhere to provide not only driving guidance but also extra off-center ballast in case you begin to tip into the tree or one of the other boulders that flank the passenger-side.

Most of the groups were pretty happy with themselves after they made it this far up the trail and the cliffs; all of which surround the next staging area and offer excellent vantage points for group photographs. For a group of 18-20 Jeeps, this part of the trail takes about 2 – 2.5 hours barring any mechanical mishaps. By now, attendees who were strangers at breakfast had become life long friends, as if they had just had a full weekend at a teambuilding exercise.

For the next 200 yards, there were a few twists and turns that eventually lead to the next off-camber climb into the "V." The "V" is a 15' climb where you use your front passenger tire to move through the first part of the obstacle. The higher you climb the right hand side of the "V," the better look we all get at your under-carriage...and we are all standing above you! The only problem with the "V" is if you come down too hard, you are likely to kiss your driver-side rear bumper corner goodbye. We've torn off more than one set of license plate brackets from TJ's and JK's at this spot over the years. This is where you learn the Jeep colloquialism: "Trail Damage is like a Tattoo but with a much better story."





The variety of challenges in the beautiful and unique terrain of the ,Texas Hill County, Inks Ranch make the two day of the Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree unforgettable and you're sure to leave with plenty of trail tales, new friends, and tons of photos.

If you're going to break a fatigued part of your Jeep, this is where it will happen. We have swapped out a few u-joints and axles more than once at this point, mostly on older rigs. The guides are so quick with this sort of repair you think you are watching a professional pit crew. Fortunately, the ground is level and there are some spectacular views of the ranch from this shelf. If you're feeling a little timid about this climb, there are always drivers or guides to lend a tow strap or winch line for added security.

From there we began our descent. A steep drop-off from a rock ledge that ranged from an easy 20" to a dramatic 45" depending on your line was followed by 300 yards of a maze of boulders, and intricate steps that tested our nerves as well as the low gear of the t-case and brakes. By mid-day, the spectacle of watching the group descend was a great place to

snack and take tons of digital photos for non-drivers. Some of the most dramatic photos we collected from the ranch over the past three years are of drivers exiting Moab. Slider protection comes in handy as you may rub up against a few boulders. So much so, I think we should rename the exit of Moab "THE SOUVENIR SHOP. "

I turned to Richard at the bottom of Moab and asked, "I trust this gives you some idea of what the Inks Ranch has to offer?" Richard responded, "Man, what a great place to wheel. I think I've already taken over 70 photos!"

We had the day to run two or three other trails. As we chatted about the history of the ranch and the Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree, we also discussed the event and compared our thoughts collectively.

Over the last three years, I have had the opportunity to visit with hundreds of Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree attendees, and I have yet to meet someone that did not think this trip was worth every penny! So come midnight on December 1st, visit the [JJUSA](http://www.jjusa.com) website and plan your own off-highway memories "Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree USA" style.

If you would like to see some of the over 20,000 photos that were collected from past three years at the Texas Spur Jeep Jamboree, please visit:

<http://www.jeep tales.com>

Photos from other JJUSA events from all over the country are listed under the "Past Events" as well.





Pura Vida and Adventure in Costa Rica

Text and photos by Kristen Schindler

The police officer motioned to us to pull over to the side of the road. We were only going 70 in an 80 kilometer per hour zone, but we pulled our rental car over to the side of the two-lane highway.

“Give me your passports.”

I was surprised he spoke such good English. We handed over our passports and waited while he looked them over and examined our vehicle. Meanwhile, cars and trucks were flying by us, inches away from our car, at over 100 kph.

“You go 91,” he says.

What? No we weren’t. But I wasn’t sure how much you should argue with a cop in a foreign country, out in the middle of nowhere.

“You pay forty dollars.”

That wasn’t so bad, but still hard to pay when you’re pretty sure you weren’t speeding. It was also interesting that he had asked for dollars instead of colones, the local currency.

“Pay now.”

“Pay you?” my husband, Ray, asks.

“Si.”

We'd read in the guidebook that you pay traffic tickets at a bank, so we mention this to him. He tells us that if we want to choose this option, we must drive an hour and a half back in the direction we had come from to get to the bank, plus pay a ten percent service charge. This would add three extra hours onto an already long day of driving.

"Just pay him," I tell Ray.

With a big sigh, Ray pulls the money out of his wallet and hands it to the officer. The officer takes the money, but is already looking down the road. He motions to another rental car to pull over. He has clocked them at exactly 91 kph.

We continue on our way, very careful to obey the speed limit signs. The interesting part is that there will be a sign when you come into the village stating that the limit is 40 kph, but then there is no sign as you leave the village stating that you can go any faster, which leaves for a lot of guesswork.

We also soon realize that going the speed limit can actually be hazardous, as pretty much every other vehicle on the road is traveling at least 20-30 kph over the limit. Huge semi-trucks pass us on the two lane road, then pull back into their lane, nearly cutting us off, seconds away from smashing into oncoming traffic.

We were on our way to Monteverde, a town in the mountains of Costa Rica, famous for its cloud forest nature preserves. Finally we were able to leave the main highway and start making our way up into the mountains. It was absolutely beautiful. I don't think I've ever seen land so green before in my life. We pass through a village where the only living thing we see is a horse standing outside a little "soda," which is what they call the small, local cafes.

"I think that was a one horse town," Ray jokes as we pass through.

The road gets worse and worse as we get higher and higher up into the mountains. We were advised to get a four-wheel drive vehicle, and by now we're pretty glad we took that advice.

While Ray drives, I try to navigate. Usually, I'm pretty good at this task, but following maps while driving in Costa Rica poses a new challenge.



Very few of the roads have signs stating what the name or number of the road is, and since the road that we're looking for may not look any different from someone's driveway, it can be a little difficult. Also, none of the villages have signs or anything stating which village it is. So, you can think, okay, we have to turn right after passing through San Felipe, but then you pass through five villages, none of which are on the map, and have no idea which one was San Felipe.

We stop a few times along the way to ask people walking along the road for directions. Everybody just points up the road, meaning "keep going." I'd also read in the guidebook that Costa Ricans are very agreeable people and don't like to give bad news. Consequently, they won't always tell you if you are headed in the wrong direction and often tell you that your destination is much closer than it actually is. I was hoping this wasn't the case here.

We are definitely out in the middle of nowhere, and I'm beginning to wonder what, if anything, will actually be in Monteverde. I asked Ray if we should have brought some food with us, since we'll be there for three days. Ray reassures me that it is quite a touristy place and there should be plenty of restaurants, and it turns out he was right.

Later I read that Monteverde actually prohibits the government from paving the roads to the town in hopes of discouraging so many people from going there. I don't think their plan worked very well because both Monteverde and Santa Elena, the little town next to it, are both packed with tourists. We see, upon arriving, that most tourists actually take van taxis to and from Monteverde. Hmm, sounds like that sure would have been a lot easier.

After accidentally driving through town, and then having to turn around on a very narrow road on the edge of the mountain, we finally find our hotel. It's a very cute place called Poco a Poco, which means "little by little." They call it this because they believe that by their environmentally-friendly practices, little by little they are saving the planet. Their green practices involve putting out recycling bins, not using air conditioning, not washing sheets and towels every night (if you're staying more than one night), and using a special process to heat the pool that is supposed to be much better for the environment.



Monteverde Road

The quaint and comfortable Poco a Poco Resort



Scenery along Monteverde Road

The woman working at the front desk is very friendly and sets us up with reservations to visit a cloud forest, and take a canopy tour the next day.

We are starving by the time we get there, so we go to eat in the restaurant attached to the hotel and I order a hamburger. I'd heard that Costa Rica is actually a pretty big beef producer. However, one thing I came to learn in Costa Rica is never to order anything "American," because despite their best efforts, they really don't know how to make anything American. When my hamburger arrived, I thought it looked a little strange. I lifted up the top bun and discovered that it actually had ham on it. Oh well, I was so hungry, it didn't matter.

Even though you can't count on American food, the local food, though very simple, is always very good. It is called a casada, which means "typical food" and consists of either chicken, fish, or pork with rice and beans. This is what Ray ordered and enjoyed it very much.

Monteverde is a really neat place. Being in a cloud forest, it is usually covered in clouds, and often raining. There are a lot of neat shops, restaurants, and art galleries. Sitting in your room or in a restaurant feels very cozy with the fog and rain outside, especially at night. Everyone seems to be very eco-conscious, and many of the galleries display the work of local artists who receive most of the profits. Because of the wildlife and unique ecosystems, it is a very popular place for tourists and school groups to visit.

The only downside is the humidity. I grew up in Florida and I thought I knew what humidity was, but this is a different story. We went swimming in the pool and our bathing suits never dried for the whole two days we were there. The only other downside was that it was pretty much impossible to sleep at our hotel. There were metal stairs just outside our room and it was incredibly loud whenever people walked on the stairs, and because our hotel was full of high school students, this seemed to be all night long.

The next day we went to the nature preserve, which is actually a privately owned park called Selvatura. We took the canopy tour, which is a succession of fourteen different ziplines, connected by platforms way up in the trees. The total distance covered is over a mile and a half. It was an exhilarating experience, flying through the canopy, fifty feet off the ground, like a bird soaring through the air. I was a little nervous about the safety of it all, especially after signing the waiver which stated that the inherent dangers included injury and death. However, they had good quality harnesses and all of the guides seemed very concerned with safety.



Ziplining in the jungle canopy

We also took a walking tour through the cloud forest which allowed us to get right up close to the plant life, which was absolutely amazing. There is so much growth on every available surface that I found myself just staring at one spot forever. Every tree has at least ten different kinds of plants growing on it. It was definitely something where pictures could never entirely capture the mystique of actually experiencing it in person.



Exploring the rainforest on foot, up-close and personal.



A view of some scary Costa Rican wildlife from far above, safely on a bridge.

Our time in Monteverde quickly came to an end. Our next stop was Manuel Antonio, another touristy town, but on the beach. We managed to find our way there without getting lost or receiving any speeding tickets. On the way, we stopped to see crocodiles in a river. Thankfully, we were looking down at them from a bridge. Some people were throwing food down to them and when they opened their mouths to reveal their long rows of sharp teeth, I was very thankful I was not any closer.

The only eventful occurrence was crossing a bridge that truly looked like it was ready to cave in at any second. It was only one lane, so only one direction of traffic could go at a time. We waited and waited, but the traffic from the other direction just kept coming. Finally, the car in front of us just decided to go, forcing the car that was coming across to back up.



The popularity of Manuel Antonio springs from the fact that it is located right next to a national park which is right on the coast. The park boasts an immense amount of wildlife and pristine beaches.



When we got there, Manuel Antonio was so crowded that we could barely squeeze our car through the streets to make it to our hotel. Our hotel turned out to be a great little place right next to the national park and a short walk from the beach. It also had a beautiful pool, but crazy as it may seem, it was too cold to actually swim in. The pool was surrounded with a jungle of tropical plants and trees, which shielded it from the sun, so I guess it never has a chance to warm up.

We'd heard a lot about theft in Costa Rica and how important it is not to leave things in your car and to always lock things up in the safe in your hotel room. This was put to the test at our hotel in Manuel Antonio when Ray accidentally left my suitcase on the side of the road behind our car for over thirty minutes after arriving at our hotel. I am happy to say that it was still there when I realized it was missing and he went back to look for it.

The highlight of Manuel Antonio was definitely the park. You are pretty much guaranteed to spot wildlife. We decided not to hire a guide (always looking to save a few bucks), but it was pretty obvious that wherever there was a crowd of people, there was probably an animal nearby. We saw many types of birds, monkeys, sloths, coatis, crabs, and iguanas. The beaches were absolutely beautiful. You have to be careful not to leave anything out when you go in the water though because the monkeys will steal it, thinking it is food. Another really neat sight at the park is an ancient turtle trap, built hundreds of years ago by the indigenous people, to catch sea turtles for food. Basically, it is a circle of rocks right at the

edge of the water; the turtles float in with the tide, then they get stuck when the tide goes back out.

Another highlight of Manuel Antonio is a restaurant called "El Avion," which means "the airplane." The restaurant is actually built around an old military plane that was sent down to Nicaragua by Reagan in the 80's. I really couldn't tell you much more about it because the article was in Spanish and that was about all I could figure out.

Our time in Costa Rica quickly came to an end and we had to head back to the airport. It was a great vacation with adventure mixed with much relaxation. Costa Rica is a truly beautiful place where the handiwork of our Creator is evident in everything you see. The people are wonderful, the beaches pristine, the sun bright, the water warm. There were definitely a few unexpected challenges, but that's the fun of traveling. Just be sure to go the speed limit if you have a rental car.



(Top) Kristen at Manuel Antonio National Park.

(Middle-Left to Right) Ancient turtle trap, white-faced monkey, Ray and Kristen enjoying the beauty of Manuel National Park.

(Bottom) Playa Espadilla Sur



Sunset on Brasalito Beach

RED ROCK CHALLENGE,

Text and Photos by Dion Kedian

KJ-GONE



On the Chi-Cheemaun. Watching the coast. Georgian Bay Ontario.

Ontario and prepared to embark the formidable Chi-Cheemaun Ferry to South Baymouth on Manitoulin Island. On the Ferry, Derek inspected the GPS data on the laptop and discovered they have only travelled 235 kilometres...another 8800 kilometres to go. The team is both excited and awe struck at the sheer length of the journey ahead.

The team arrived at South Baymouth Manitoulin Island and continued immediately north on Highway 6. As they exited the Ferry, they were given waves from pedestrians, saw some people taking photographs while others stared as they had never seen a Jeep ® Liberty with a 2.5 inch lift, off-highway tires, lights pointing in every direction, a roof rack loaded with a spare tire and a variety of weather proof storage solutions, and decals from front to rear. An impressive sight, or so it would seem to onlookers.

After what seemed like the blink of an eye, the guys reached the Trans-Canada Highway. This strip of asphalt took them clear across Canada to Lethbridge Alberta, where they turned south into the United States.

Weather in Northern Ontario never seems quite right, and this time was no exception. To their surprise, it had gotten quite cold. Coming from high humidity 35 degree C weather in the Greater Toronto area, it quickly dropped to 14 degrees C with light rain as they passed by Elliot Lake. Being prepared though, the team stopped and switched into pants and jackets and would remain that way almost clear across the country.

A quick check of the GPS gave the indication that everything seemed to be going smoothly. Dion looked in the side-view mirror at a quickly approaching transport truck, and suddenly saw a black object flying through the air behind them. The transport truck swerved slightly but too slow, and ran over the object. Dion, in a slight panic, looked at Derek with a horrified look and nearly yelled "We gotta stop! I think we lost a storage bin and a truck ran over it!!" Derek's face turned a few shades lighter while the guys pulled the rig over. They looked at the roof rack and noticed immediately that a spare tire came loose and came off. They turned around to find that a good motorist pulled the tire off the road for them. Dion and Derek picked it up and proceeded to a logging trail where they worked in the rain to replace and firmly secure the spare tire.

5:00 on the morning of July 9th 2007. Dion Kedian and Derek Greber embarked on a trip they would never forget. A trip that took over six solid months of careful calculating and planning; a trip that was changed over and over again until it had been perfected.

The two KJ enthusiasts departed for the 2007 Red Rock Challenge in Moab, and it would take them across Canada, down through the United States, and all the way to the scorching climates of Moab, Utah during a hot summer in July.

Hosted by the KJ Expeditionary Group, the Overland Expeditions Team readily jumped to the occasion and had begun planning for the challenge in early December 2006.

The team consisted of: Dion Kedian, a British Ex-pat of Milton Ontario, Canada; Derek Greber, a Polish ex-pat of Mississauga Ontario, Canada; Scott Cole of Tennessee, USA, also known as "The Boss" of Illinois, USA. Over the next six months, the team worked tirelessly to prepare for a trip they would not soon forget.

For this incredible journey, the team chose two Silver 2006 Jeep ® Liberties, and would live, sleep and eat from these amazing machines in a true test of their mechanical endurance.

Back in time to 5am, July 9th 2007.

Dion waited patiently for Derek to arrive in the Liberty with bags packed. Still dark outside, Dion saw the

tell tale silhouette of a Jeep ® Liberty, expedition-ready, pull around the corner. Dion picked up his bags and placed them in the Liberty, and hopped in the passenger seat anticipating the journey ahead.

Dion then checked the wireless laptop mounted in the Liberty, GPS-ready and connected, and received a confirmation email from Scott in Tennessee saying that he was ready to go and looked forward to meeting the team. The Red Rock Challenge was a go!

As Derek drove out of the Greater Toronto area, Dion inspected the GPS data, confirmed their route, and prepared for the first leg of the journey.

As the sun broke, the duo arrived in Tobermory





Rabbit Blanket Lake. Lake Superior Provincial Park. Ontario.

Later that day, with Derek driving in the pouring rain through Northern Ontario, Dion fell asleep. The split second Dion awoke the first and last thing he saw was a rock the size of a snooker ball flying through the air and slamming into the windshield with an astounding BANG. Dion opened his eyes after the collision, looked at Derek, and then looked at the windshield. No damage? Derek was laughing in a nervous way. Dion was blurting out loud about how he thought his head had been taken off by "That giant boulder," and Derek was laughing and talking at the same time, describing how the moment went "into slow motion" as this huge geological ball flew through the air.

A little foreshadowing? Tales of things to come? Only time would tell.

It was getting late and the two were getting tired. Fifteen hours on the road, and they were just reaching Lake Superior Provincial Park. At the park, they set up camp for the night and enjoyed a quiet night under the stars of a Northern Ontario sky. The view was awe-inspiring to say the least. Millions upon millions of stars seemed touchable, but in reality they were millions of light years away. Nonetheless, it was an incredible sight to be seen.

Morning broke, and the guys set a goal to arrive in Winnipeg Manitoba after a brief check with the GPS data. Driving out of the Provincial Park, the Jeep® received a few looks, and the team ventured further north around the weaving, undulating roads of northern Lake Superior towards Thunder Bay.

When the team made their way to Thunder Bay Ontario, it was pouring rain. Dion and Derek stopped to see the Terry Fox Memorial on the top of the hill above the city, and it was an incredible view of Thunder Bay, and an incredible memorial that was well worth the stop.

Come mid-afternoon, the team finally crossed the border from Ontario to Manitoba, and agreed



Checking the GPS. Winnipeg Manitoba.

that while they were far from home, they weren't even halfway through the trip. Laughing about this, they stopped in the Manitoba Welcome Centre where Derek broke out some of his famous canned "Tirolska" meat from the food storage bin, and the guys laughed as they ate the heavily salted and seasoned meat. Afterwards, they were back on the road.

Winnipeg came quickly. What a beautiful City. The streets were clean and the people were friendly. The two agreed that it is a far cry from where they call home, where the people keep to themselves and the streets are always dirty.

After a nineteen hour day on the road, the team agreed that they would stop outside of Winnipeg for the night and press for Saskatchewan the next day. Just before the team set up for the night, they caught a glimpse of the Northern Lights, otherwise known as Aurora Borealis. It was an amazing display of green and white ripples and waves of light.

Entering Saskatchewan, the scenery changed drastically and suddenly from low rolling hills and forests to sparse and flat terrain as they entered the Great Plains of central Canada. The team had some great weather as they drove through the province that claims it is the "Land of the Living Skies." The guys agreed that it was appropriately named because the land was so flat it made the sky and the horizon seem vast and huge, and with the perfect skies that featured hints of puffy clouds, it certainly seemed to be alive and vibrant.

Driving through Regina Saskatchewan, the team suddenly lost GPS communication with the laptop system. They were blind as a bat with a navigation system that was less useful than a bag of wet hammers. They had to stop.

Proud of being a day and a half ahead of schedule, they were confident they could use the time to repair the GPS. Two hours went by and the GPS was fixed. Relieved to be back "online," the team ventured forward.

The next day, the team entered the much anticipated Province of Alberta and began noticing the landscape had become hillier and less flat. It took the entire day, but it was well worth the time as they drove through the beautiful province and then reached Lethbridge, the pivot point where the team would go from west to going south. Stoked with anticipation of travelling south along the Continental Divide, the team stayed in Lethbridge that night and performed a few minor checks of the Jeep® and equipment, and sat on a park bench with the sunset while eating from a couple of cans of the aforementioned famous "Tirolska."

Sunrise came quickly, and with excited anticipation the team jumped out of bed and hit the Jeep®. A quick GPS check and they were on their way to the border at Montana.

A short drive later, the mountains of the famous Rockies were visible and still snow capped. The Liberty was running strong in the high altitude, and it seemed ready to hit the Continental Divide. After a very brief border crossing, the team entered Montana and was eager to get into Glacier National Park.

Driving through Glacier National Park was one of the most memorable and fantastic drives they had ever done. Breathtaking vistas, high altitudes, snow-capped peaks, crystal blue topaz coloured lakes, and glaciers. As the team climbed a peak, the Liberty suddenly



Typical Saskatchewan scenery.





**Glacier National Park
mountain scenery. Montana**



Continental Divide

started to overheat. The team opened the windows and turned up the heat on the fan controls, and kept moving. The heat had subsided...at least for the time being.

After an incredible experience in the National Park, the guys decided to run "Endurance-style" all the way to Utah. Pushing through the mountains, Dion drove the first leg and as night fell, Derek took over. The team pressed on, and this became too much for Dion as he fell asleep in the passenger seat.

Dion awoke to darkness, and the sounds of the Jeep ® rolling and the satellite radio pumping out music. He looked over at Derek who was enjoying the night driving. After a few late night fuel stops, the team crossed the Utah border where they saw a variety of forest fires and crews working to clear them. The guys had heard about these and were concerned about highway closures. Thankfully though, none of the highways were closed.

Day broke and the team was still in "Endurance Mode." The Jeep ® was running smoothly, seemingly enjoying the endurance-style drive that was a non stop tour of the U.S. Midwest. It was then they immediately noticed the sudden environment change. A little warmer, very rocky, new mountains, and dirt and sand. To top it all off, not a lot of life or people were around.



Welcome to Moab

They stopped at a rest stop just after the "Welcome to Moab" sign, and noticed the rise in temperature almost immediately. They left Canada at 20 degrees C and now found themselves at 35 degrees C, and that wasn't anywhere near what they would experience in the coming days.

After leaving the rest stop, they noticed they were entering into a deep valley and the rock and ground suddenly turned into a deep red and orange colour. They had made it. They were finally in Moab, and the Red Rock Challenge was truly underway.

Rolling into Moab, the team got a lot of looks from people around town. The Jeep ® Liberty was outfitted and loaded to the eyebrows with gear and decals, and it had Ontario license plates. It was an impressive sight for sure!

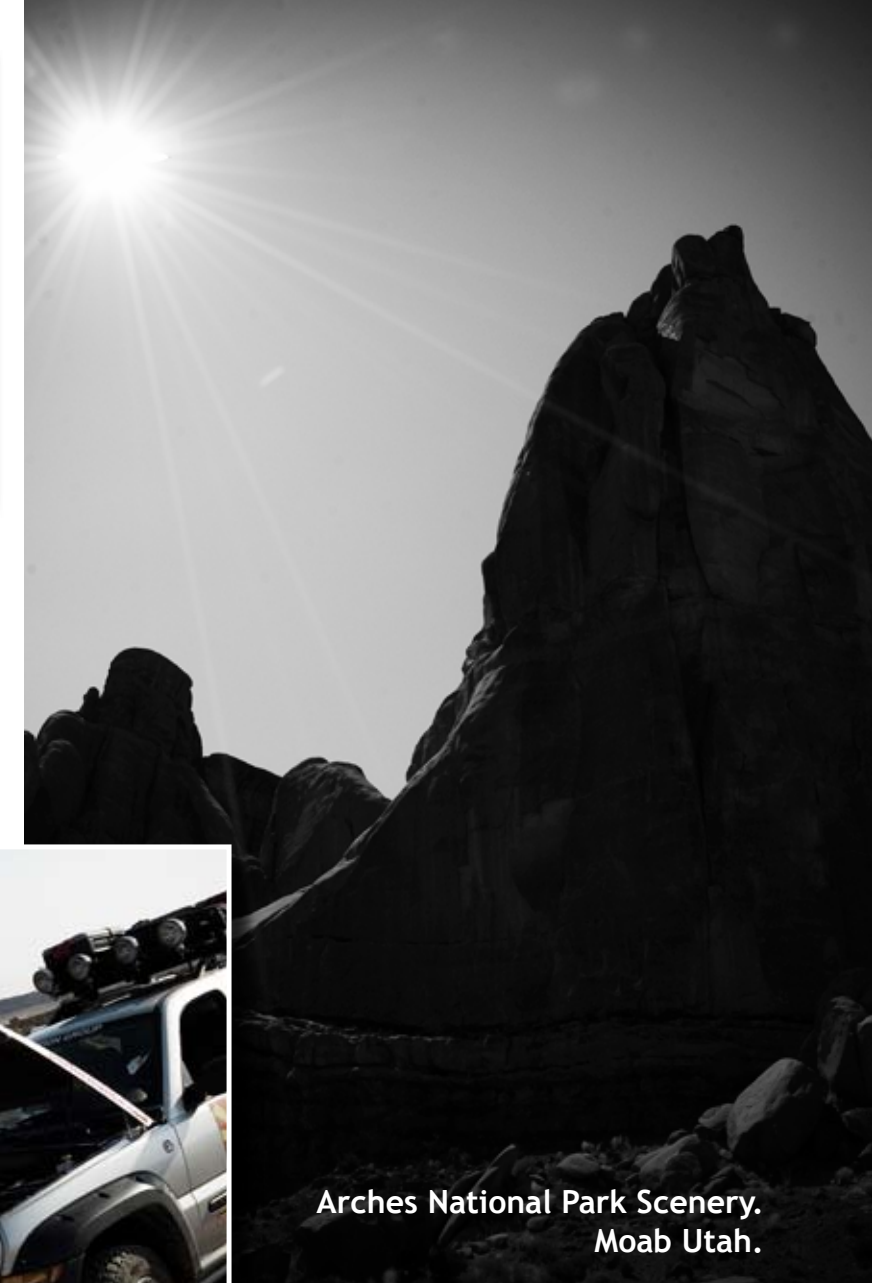
Dion and Derek were at Moab for two days before meeting the other half of the team, and they decided to tour around the desert. They located some backcountry trails very quickly, as well as Arches National Park, and decided to try some of them out. They drove to Arches National Park with the air conditioning blowing full-blast and it was pretty hot at 45 degrees C.

Once in the park, they climbed the first hill and almost immediately the Jeep ® began to overheat. They opened the windows, turned off the air conditioning, and turned on the dreaded heat to let the engine cool off. It worked and the temperature settled though the team was without air conditioning in the brutally rising heat.

They toured the park, and around 2pm they noticed the heat to be at its highest, touching around 55 – 58 degrees C. Incredible heat, just astounding! Neither of them had ever experienced these environmental extremes before. As they sat dumbfounded at how anything could survive or live in these conditions, a small rabbit hopped by.



**Major overheating
issue. Moab Utah.**



**Arches National Park Scenery.
Moab Utah.**



The infamous Delicate Arch. Moab Utah.





Scenic overlook. Bull Canyon jeep Trail. Moab Utah.



Gooney Bird Rock. Moab Utah.



Fins N Things Trail. Moab Utah



Fins N Things Trail. Moab Utah



Climbing the slope. Moab Utah



Fins N Things Trail. Moab Utah

Later in the day, the team drove to "Bull Canyon," an easy backcountry trail. However, with the rising heat, they ran into overheating problems deep in Bull Canyon trail. Trying to find shelter was near impossible as the heat was unrelenting and pounded down on the guys and the limping Jeep ®. Luckily they found some shade on a small sand dune under a wall of rock, and let the Jeep ® and themselves cool off. They slowly made their way out to their relief and headed for base camp. Tomorrow they would walk the harrowing "Delicate Arch" hiking trail in Arches National Park.

Sunrise had arrived and the guys tended to the Jeep ® to ensure all was well. As it all seemed to be, and they didn't want to be stranded in the desert again, they headed for Arches National Park to hike the Delicate Arch Trail. At the hiking trail they noticed a sign warning of people having to

be rescued from this trail due to dehydration and heat exhaustion. Heeding this warning, the guys ensured they had plenty of water and headed off.

The initial climb was hell. The heat was around 55 degrees C and it reflected off the slick rock trail, making it even hotter. It was all uphill too, and they were gasping the hot desert air into their starved lungs. But eventually and happily, they made it to the impressively large Delicate Arch. There they took a break to relax and admire this creation of nature. They then decided to head back.

The hike back was more intense than the hike there. Dion began feeling the effects of heat exhaustion, and he began focusing on getting back to the Jeep ®. In the nearly 60 degree C heat, Dion was finding himself feeling confused and occasionally forgetting where he was, but he pushed on. He was definitely reaching an emergency status, and he knew it. He needed cool water. The water

in his hip flask was hotter than a fresh cup of tea as the surrounding air had heated it up in no time. With every sip, he found his core temperature rising dangerously high. That warning at the trail head was no joke.

Just as he dragged his feet to the Jeep ®, he felt a sudden rush of adrenalin and he knew this was his last chance to get himself into the Jeep ® where the cold water that he desperately needed was waiting. He took advantage of this and charged for the Jeep ®. Thankfully he made but it sure was close.

Close behind, Derek slowly trudged up, shirt off, sun hat on. He, too, was feeling the effects of the heat. They both agreed that it was too hot and dangerous for hiking anymore so they decided to hit a driving trail in the park. Shortly after entering this trail, the Jeep ® overheated violently. Smoke and steam rose from under the hood. The guys inspected it closely and noted

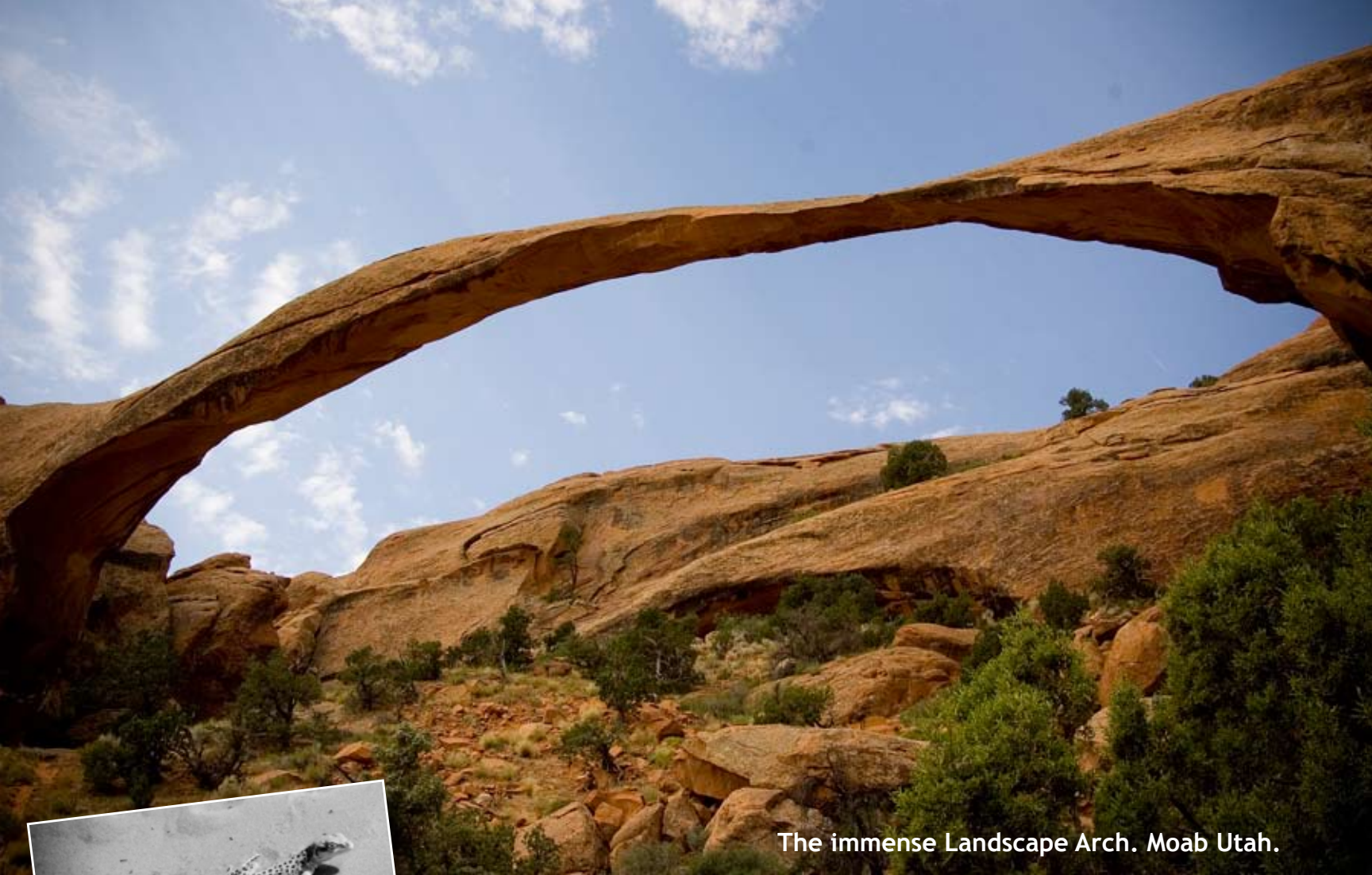
the air conditioning clutch had burned out, and this was what had been causing the Jeep ® to overheat. It was so hot in the area that the air conditioning unit couldn't keep up with creating enough cool air.

They turned in for the night. Tomorrow they would meet up with the other half of the team.

It is here that they met with Scott Cole and his Uncle, affectionately known as "The Boss." They all met at the Moab Brewery the next day where they were well received. They discussed the heat and the problems Dion and Derek had encountered. Shocked and amazed, the new half of the team agreed that remaining local instead of attempting the long White Rim Canyon for three days was the safest idea.

That night the team headed for Long Valley Canyon. The drive was a cool, relaxing trip into a deep canyon where they saw wildlife and enjoyed the cool night





The immense Landscape Arch. Moab Utah.



Moab wildlife.
Moab Utah.

air. It was a drastic change from the previous day but it wouldn't last long. Day break came and the team headed for the famed Fins N Things trail. They loaded up their Liberties and headed out as the heat of the day continued to rise steadily.

At Fins N Things, they experienced a lot of rock climbs and descents; it was a fabulous trail. Dion once again started to slowly get the familiar feelings of heat exhaustion while he was out in the slick rocks spotting and guiding the Jeeps through the terrain, and repeatedly getting in and out of a Jeep ® with no air conditioning.

After a long, slow day on the trail, it was decided that the team could no longer continue the trail ahead. The heat was just too intense and was battering the team badly. They left via an emergency access road and headed for town. It was a long, hot day and they needed a cool break at the famed Moab Brewery. This had truly been a personal challenge of great magnitude at this point.

The next day was spent working on the Jeep ® while the Tennessee half of the team took a tour through Arches National Park. Later they all met up and headed out for the Klondike Bluffs trail. It started out hotter than anything, but as evening fell it cooled down. Here they drove over vast expanses of slick rock and looked at million year old dinosaur foot prints in the rock surface. It was an amazing

and mind- expanding experience. After that, they drove back in the cool night air and enjoyed the evening.

The Le Sal Mountains beckoned to the team. They looked green, and they looked like a challenge. SO, the team headed off to the peaks of the Le Sal Mountains.

It was a completely different world; trees, grass, lakes, wildlife, much cooler temperatures. The team stood on a high overlook and could see the blazing heat rising off the red rock desert below. They briefly felt good about not baking away in the heat of the valley.

This tour took the entire day. The Jeeps rolled along smoothly, up and down the beautiful peaks, without a worry. Dion and Derek's Jeep ® had a heat issue, and Team Tennessee lost their 4x4 lever control; however,



Crossing the crack. Klondike Bluffs.



Colorado border crossing.

Off they went. A two man endurance run, specifically designed to test the limits of the Jeep ® and the team. The point was to see if it could be done in preparation for the next big journey: the 2008 Great North Crossing from Halifax to Denali.

They occasionally switched duties through Colorado, Nebraska, and Illinois. Derek proved to be a driving machine during this journey as he handled the wheel more frequently than Dion, who could barely keep his eyes open. A little endurance training for him was definitely required.

Once in Michigan, they pushed on. They had only stopped once, in Nebraska for 2 hours. The rest of the time was spent driving straight through which was a true testament of endurance.

Late at night on the 20th of July, they arrived back home. They immediately noticed how much darker they were than everyone else, and how much red dust and dirt was affixed to almost everything they owned. They further noticed how many insects paid the ultimate price on their front bumper, en route to the team's quest for endurance glory.

They looked at each other and agreed they didn't know what to do the next day. There was no where to drive and nothing to do. The team laughed and shook hands, knowing that it would not have been possible without the support of their families and their generous sponsors who all knew the risks involved in such a high speed endurance tour. They agreed that it was a tough trip but it was one they would never forget. What an experience it was to see the entire North American Continent in two weeks; endurance-style. It was quite the feat, and the perfect practice run for the second, larger endurance challenge; The 2008 Great North Crossing where the team will cross Canada entirely on the southern end and then head north and cross the territories.



all problems were fixed on the trail in a few minutes. This was a beautiful trail, and they didn't return until late at night.

The next day was departure day. The team, sad to leave this beautiful desert, also looked forward to getting out of the heat. They headed east for Colorado, and this leg had been designated as their fourth personal challenge. The four challenges of the journey were:

Cross Canada in three days. Completed.

Travel the Continental Divide. Completed

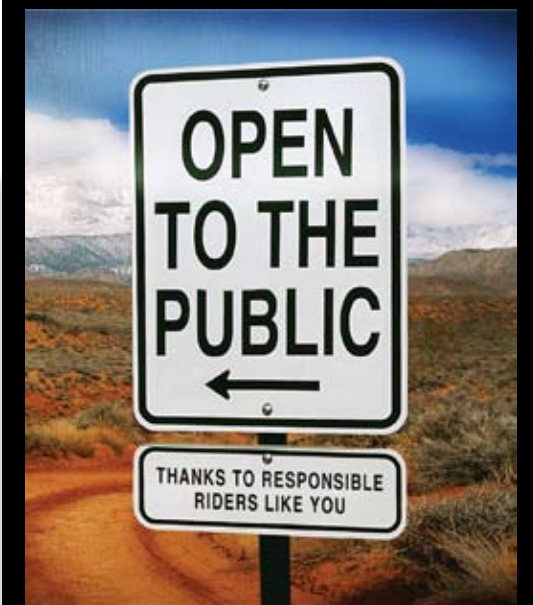
Endure the heat exhausting climates of the Moab Desert in July. Completed.

Cross the United States in two days. Underway.

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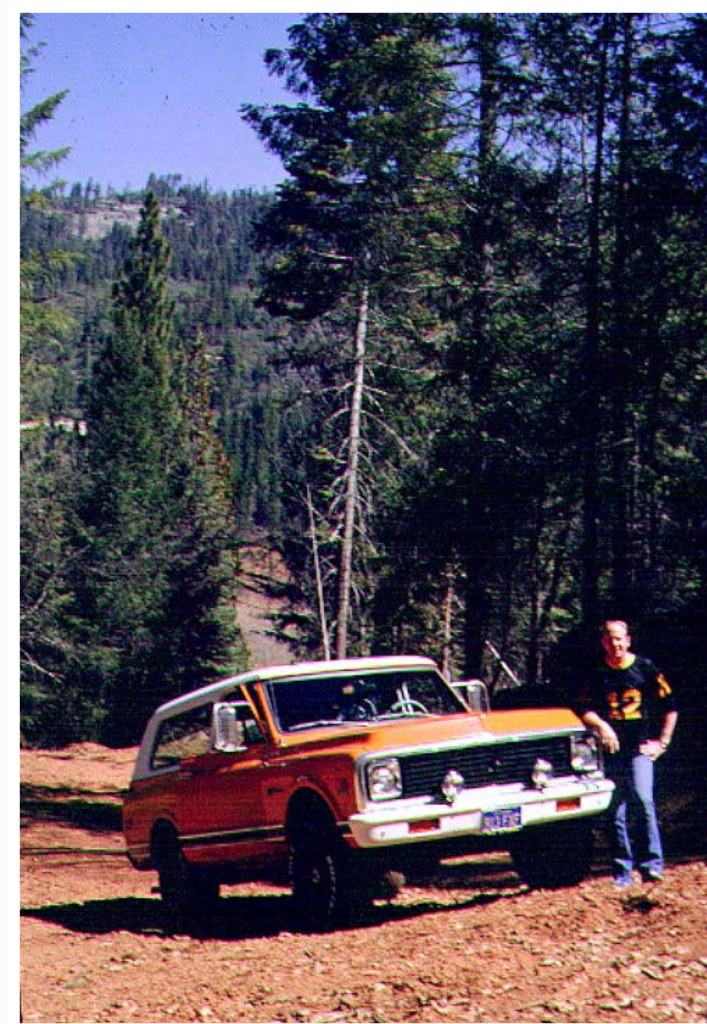
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To read more about Jeep KJ Liberties and their use as expedition vehicles, visit the Overland Expeditions website at:

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Me and my new '72 K5 Blazer in the Gold Country of the Sierra Nevada mountains of California 35 years ago, when the off-highway adventure bug big me.

excursions, that required a few more things for creature comfort. So in the great American way, a progression commenced of increasingly larger travel trailers and the purchase of my first off-highway vehicle, a brand new, shiny (and pretty unique for those times), 1972 Chevy K-5 Blazer. The Blazer pulled the trailer to the mountains and then, after the trailer was unhooked, it took the family on some great trails and mountain roads and across a number of rapid, scary streams. By this time we were ALL hooked on the adventure lifestyle: enjoying the beauty of the outdoors, roaming the hills, and challenging ourselves with some pretty moderate rock climbing.

Fast forward about a quarter century or more. I now find myself living in North Central Washington State. I accidentally ended up here after completing a career of aircraft maintenance in the Navy and another career as an Industrial Engineer with Boeing – helping to build 747's. Never planned to be here as I am an uprooted Easterner, but will never go back now that I am out here in the "frontier".

It's now 2007 and I am now 70 years old. The darn kids are getting older and older, and all of a sudden I am a great-grandpa. My darling wife of 42 years recently passed away from pulmonary fibrosis, and I am out here facing the task of morphing into something so I can continue on with life.

Then IT happened. As I drove by the Jeep ® dealer, my eye snapped onto this really strange vehicle with a very strange paint job. The first time by, I just passed IT and went home, but for some reason my mind dwelt on that vehicle and the next day, I drove by IT again. Only this time I stopped to look in the windows and at the sticker. OK, it was a new Wrangler and IT was painted this incredible love-it-or-hate-it light metallic green which I later learned was named (for some reason) Rescue Green. My first reaction was that it was a really strange color, but the Jeep ® had a 6-speed manual transmission, and the color started to grow on me. A few days later, I actually went into the dealer and I went for a test ride with the great, no-pressure sales agent.

An Old Dog Learns Some New Tricks

Text by Rich Cronin
Photos by Rich, Dan, and Amy Cronin

What in the heck would make a seventy year old great grandfather give up the comfort and amenities of his thirty eight foot luxury motor home so he would end up sleeping on a \$12 air mattress in a \$24 tent, held down by big rocks on a field composed of crushed basalt and sticker burr weeds? How about two things? The first is an almost life-long love of roaming the outdoors and, probably most strange of all, his very first brand new Jeep Wrangler. That's what started this whole unusual saga.

My love of the outdoors started when I was about 14 or 15 when our family took a real vacation into the

Maine woods. That's where and when the beauty of nature and the forest, and the fun of fishing and the incredible smell of a wood-burning fireplace, caused the bug to bite. Hard. Unfortunately, that bug lay dormant for almost 20 years and it wasn't until the '70's, when my own family started to grow, that we all were able to relive that love of the outdoors.

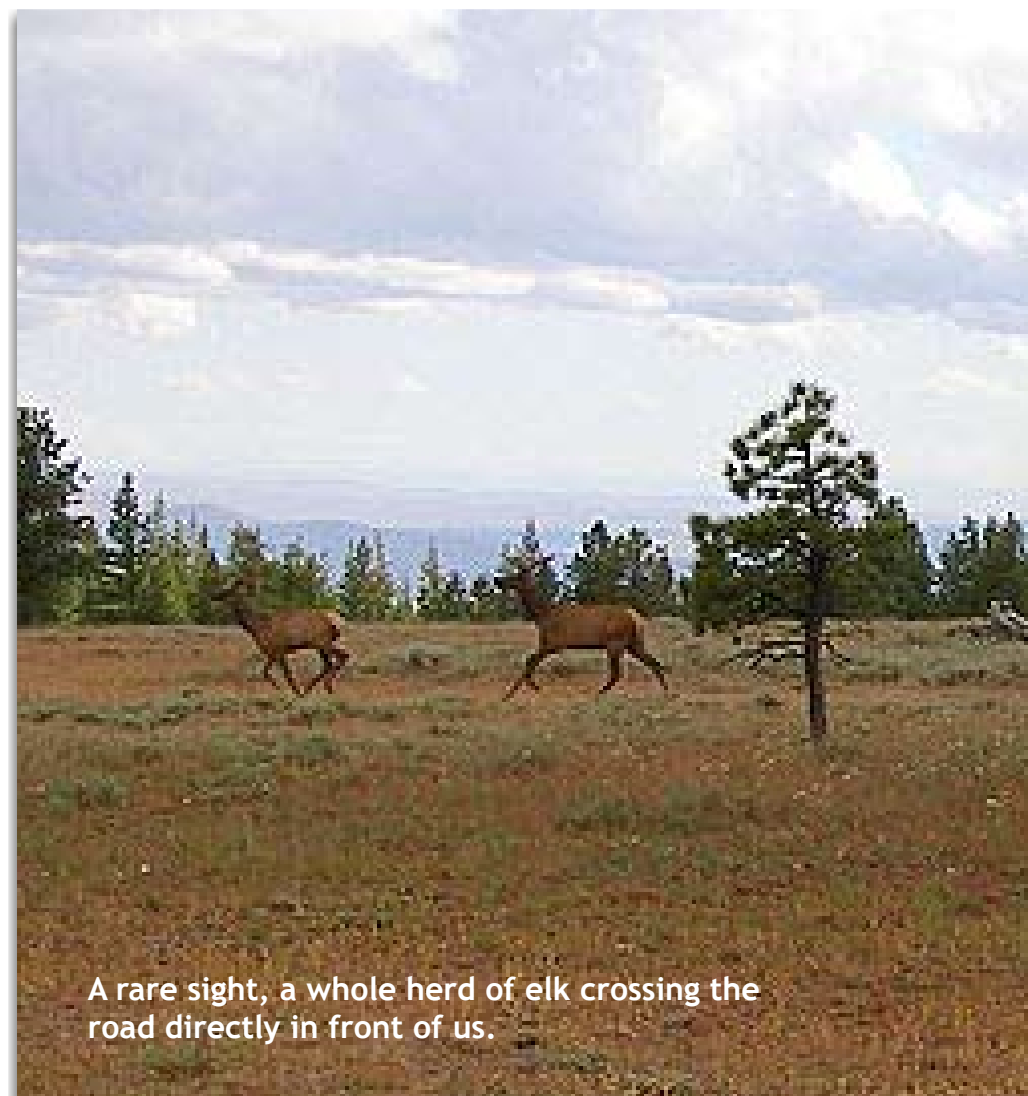
It was in that era around 1971 or 1972 when the big "backpacking" rage began. I happened to be midway through a Navy career at that time, and we were stationed at Moffett Field Naval Air Station in

central California. Nearby were the beautiful Sierra Nevada Mountains, Yosemite, and the historical Gold Country. They were only a couple of hours away, so backpacking is what we did. At that time, "we" meant me and my older son and some of our friends. Hauling all of our belongings in a backpack through the woods, eventually sleeping in a down bag on a foam pad in a little pup tent was real honest fun.

Of course, that naturally progressed because if Mom, Dad and our four kids were to be included in these

(Top Left) It's always 5:00 somewhere, even in the middle of nowhere. (Top Right) Stopping for a top of the hill snack after climbing over 5000' from the river on the ay home. This is where I also discovered the complete disaster in my ice chest. Yuk! (Bottom Left) A sunny day high in the hills of Eastern Washington as the NWOS group heads towards the Columbia Gorge. (Bottom Right) Rich Cronin and his Rescue Green 07 JK. A proud, pleased and revitalized great-grandfather.





A rare sight, a whole herd of elk crossing the road directly in front of us.



Sold! Yep, the easiest sale ever. All we had to do was a little haggle over my trade-in and the Jeep was mine. I bought IT; the salesman didn't have to sell anything.

Now what? Until now, I hadn't related to you that my decades-old love of the outdoors and trails, and off-highway adventuring, had become imbedded into another one of my kids, not my backpacking son of 40 years ago, but my youngest son who was too little to join us on the California trails years ago. However, he has a slight aberration in that he is absolutely taken aback by the history and mystique of the venerable Land Rover family of vehicles. I cannot pry him from his errant ways but it's OK, we are able to co-exist in perfect harmony despite our diverse tastes. My son has had, and completely rebuilt, an old Series '60's LR, gone through two LR Discoveries, and a Range Rover. He is now the very, very proud owner of a Defender 90 which looks like it just came out of a Stewart Granger movie from the 1950's. He loves his Defender, and I love seeing him so happy with it. And because we both love the trails, this brings me to the crux of the saga.

I was home one evening, and the phone rang. Dan (my son) said something like, "Well, Pop, since you have that Jeep, we need to get it out on the trail and get it dirty."

Oh, boy. Brand new, 1200 miles, and I hadn't slept on the ground in a little tent in 40 years, but the gauntlet had been thrown down and it was up to me to accept the challenge or be thought of by my flesh and blood as a – gasp – a poser! No. Anything but that. "You may get it a little scratched up, I have to warn you about that" he said. "Oh brother," I thought to myself. I can't whine in front of my son, and besides that I had always prodded him into action with an old saying "Yachts weren't built to be tied up to the dock, they were meant to be out on the high seas." So if you substitute "Jeeps, garages, and trails" for "Yachts, docks and high seas," you can immediately see that I had absolutely no recourse but to say "OH, sure, no problem, when and where are we going?"

The "when" turned out to be in two weeks, and the "where" turned out to be a two and a half day trip through the Central Washington hills of the Quilomene and Colockum State Wildlife Areas, which border the west side of the majestic Columbia River as it heads south towards the Washington and Oregon borders and as it works its way to the Pacific Ocean. This particular part of the state is completely different from the "wet side" of the Cascade Mountain Range where the big cities on the coast are located. This area is

very dry and the land quite high. Where the Columbia River is at about 800 feet, the top of the hill where the trails are located is about 5000 feet higher.

Our venture started with a collection point in Ellensburg for the 8 vehicles that were joining us to meet for the trip. So here I was, in my brand new Jeep ® with its very subtle, nearly iridescent GREEN paint job, surrounded by seasoned campers in their 7 Land Rovers, Range Rovers, and the aforementioned Defender 90.

"Oh boy, what have I gotten myself into?" The only other people I knew were my son, his wife Amy, and their two kids, Lucia and Cody. Everyone else was a complete stranger, and I was the "old interloper" (or so I thought). The group's official name that joined us was the Northwest Overland Society, which sounds a little stodgy but belies the real character of the group.

After a delightful lunch, the entourage set off for the trail, heading north from Ellensburg. Along the way, I noticed how "funny" it is that a road can deteriorate so quickly. From pavement to smooth gravel to little rocks to, well, just the rocks that happened to be there when it was a wagon trail. About a mile up the road, we had to make our first mechanical "adjustment" – deal with an overheated radiator caused by a leaky

seal on one of the other vehicles. This halt prompted a ceremony among off-highway adventurers called "airing down." Everyone was out there letting the air out of their tires in a frenzy – except for me. I thought this was kind of like parachuting, you know, jumping out of a perfectly good airplane, etc. Heading to the wilderness and letting air out of the tires seemed counter intuitive, so I didn't do it in all my senior stubbornness. After all, this was just a drive in the country. Sure.

The climb out of Ellensburg was absolutely beautiful as the sparse trees gave way to open high plains. As we approached the summit, we encountered an immense herd of elk. There must have been 25-30 of them, and they showed off for us. We stopped to take pictures and they accommodated us by circling in front of our caravan and crossing the road from right to left. They then traipsed through a meadow and stopped to watch the odd collection of vehicles that were there. Two sets of gawkers watching each other. It was quite funny.

From the summit, we temporarily departed from Colockum Road through a series of turns and twists, taking short stints on such trails as Caribou, Perkins, Parke Creek and Beacon Roads until we intersected with Army Road. Army Road took us over 5000 feet



down from our high plains perch to the shores of the Columbia River, all in about 12 twisty, rocky, angled miles of bad road. It sure was beautiful wilderness though. The new Jeep® hanged in there though it beat me to death (Remember, I didn't air-down my tires earlier – tactical error). I kept thinking to myself that any minute now, all 4 wheels on my new Trail Rated Jeep® would fall off, and it wouldn't hack it in this terrain. "Oh, if there is an off-roading God, please be good to me," I kept thinking. Besides the Jeep®, I had to make sure that I held up under the pressure as well. After all, we didn't want the old man to hold up the wagon train either.

Bang, crash, boom, bounce, whack, and oh, yes scrape. I had been warned about this. The sagebrush paint removal tools; pin-striping, aka Badge of Courage; the dirt and dust (clouds of it). "No whining, suck it up, your new paint is being destroyed. Your interior is being trashed. Live with it." What a rude awakening!



Mercifully, we were finally at our destination, a meadow showing signs of being an old abandoned farm of some sort. There were chestnut and cottonwood trees and a small stream approximately 3 feet across with flowing water. Oh, and there were rocks, rocks, and more rocks. After two or three discussions and false starts, we all decided on a campsite area and then the great unloading and setting-up ceremony began. Wow! A LOT has happened in the "camping" industry over the years. I witnessed the most amazing array of fold up and fold out tents, canopies, portable potty enclosures, kitchens, inverters for the blender (hey, gotta have a Piña Colada to celebrate, right?) and not one, not two, but three top-of-the-rig fold-up portable off-the-ground tents. Incredible! And there I was with my pathetic little one-man tent and my inflatable air mattress. All brand new.

In my feeble attempt to setup the tent, it was obvious that I was totally lost. No more tent poles, it's all flexible fiberglass rods now. Ah, but a damsel came to rescue me from MY distress. My darling granddaughter asked me if I needed help.

"What? OK, kiddo, show me your stuff." It was almost like, "Grandpa get out of the way." She barked orders at me like a drill sergeant. "Here, put these together. Slip them through these slots, hook up the bottoms here, bend the poles there, and hook up the other part here. Where's the rain-fly? Put it over here; hook up the four corners here, like this. Put the entryway awning up like this. Get some rocks inside to hold the tent down (that's where my grandson came in handy – the rock collector par excellence.)" Then badda-bing – it was all done. I sure learned a LOT from the grandkids. What great fun!

The first night of sleeping in my mini-tent on the air mattress was absolutely great, but I did learn that the best way to keep warm with a sleeping bag is to wear a hoody sweatshirt – too much heat radiates from your cranium, especially if you are devoid of natural protection and insulation (i.e. hair).

The next day was all about exploring; however, we decided not to go back up the hill due to concerns about fuel consumption. So we all walked to the beach, about 1000 yards away by this gorgeous inlet and sandy spit. Ah, hours of entertainment watching how the boating crowd does their thing! From pontoon boats to cigarette speed boats, we saw them all.

Later in the day, it became very, very hot so the group decided to split into two completely different sections. The "adventurers" packed up their day-trip stuff and headed out to explore the incredibly interesting basalt rock formations in the area, and the other group (mine), the "planners", took their lawn chairs down to the tree-shaded creek bed and resorted to some reading and high-level cogitation. That was until the whole pack of us fell asleep and enjoyed the peace and quiet and life

in general. Later on, the "adventurers" came back to the camp, and the "planners" awoke refreshed. The prep for the big potluck dinner was ready to commence. The cooks whipped up their favorite dishes after the gatherers had to go quite a way to find some decent firewood to cook on. An evening of fun, conversation, food and drink began, and it quietly ended at about midnight.

The next morning, we all knew it was time to repack all of our stuff, toss out the rocks, pull the sticker-burrs from our socks, and shake the dirt out of the tents that were on the ground. I could see a lot of reluctance in some folks – they sure didn't want to break camp, but break it we did, finally about 11am.

The inevitable time had come for me to face the fear of going down the hill, some of those gullies that had been blessed with the name "road" had to be overcome, only this time we faced an 11 mile uphill claw-fest. Immediately after getting on the move, the first obstacle was a dense thicket of cottonwood bushes. It was the accursed sagebrush scrape-fest again. I could just imagine giant globs of different colors of paint dangling from the razor-like branches. I thought to myself: "Well, just keep moving, gotta get out of here somehow." I can say that at the bottom of that mile-high hill, it not only looked a LONG way up to the top, it was.

More crashing, banging, and propelling rocks from under the tires ensued, and I "bottomed out" twice. I imagined at that time that my transmission, transfer case, or differential had smashed wide open with lube and oil gushing out everywhere. Fortunately though, my Wrangler was ok.

My Jeep is not lifted (yet). The Land Rovers all had higher clearance than I did, so I learned to be careful and take the high side of the ditch, and not straddle big rocks but rather drive over them with wheels, not transmission parts. My greatest fear about going back up those gullies turned out to be a non-issue. Just as it's much easier to go up in elevation on an icy road than it is to go downhill, the same thing holds true for the off-highway situation. The very places I had worried so much about were pretty easy to traverse.

Over an hour later, we made it back up to the top of the hill, and we decided to take a break and have a little snack and enjoy the successful emergence from the depths to the heights. Our one vehicle with overheating problems had the same thing to happen again, which slowed us down a little bit, but that's when we turned the delay into a snack-fest.

Ah, yes. I learned one more gigantic lesson on the uphill, end of the adventure, part of my journey. At the bottom of the hill, drain the water from the ice chest. Oh, sure, on the way down the hill the chest was full of ice. However, on the way up after two days, it had become mostly ice water. Yes, I heard it sloshing around all the way



(Top) Part of our campsite as the NWOS group prepares for an evening of friendship and getting to know each other. (Middle) Who needs a huge motorhome - here is all I need to survive (for a little while) (Bottom) My son's family tent sheltered from the wind between my Jeep and his Land Rover Defender 90.



up the hill; and yes, I should have checked for this; and yes, you cannot believe what I found when it came time to contribute to the snack-fest.

I had some plastic containers full of butter and mayonnaise, a half dozen eggs, a little container of milk, a few bottles of salad dressings, salad, and lunchmeat, and a block of cheese. Anyway, all that gigantic sloshing around resulted in (remember me mentioning the blender earlier?) the worst, most disgusting, greasy, milky stinking cesspool of repulsive liquid with the rest of my food floating in it. That wasn't any Piña-Colada in there either, folks. The ONLY thing I could salvage out of this quagmire was the block of cheese, and I had to rinse it off with a jug of drinking water so that it was consumable. After this, I slammed the lid shut and decided to deal with it when I got home.

After taking a few pictures, we passed a stand of brand new wind-farm windmills that had been put up last year. "Those things ought to be painted earth tones to blend in," I thought to myself. After another few miles, we rejoined Colockum Road and it became time for the party to split up, half of the group was going back south to Ellensburg and the other half was going to finish the trip to Wenatchee by going north.

The rest of the trip home? More beauty of nature with great views, good company, laughs, camaraderie, and real quality time with my family that I would not have missed for anything in this world. Was I ready to go again? You betcha!

And this darn JK Wrangler, it has done something to me, something good. Remember when you first got your driver's license, you would find ANY excuse to "go to the store, go to the post office, go to....etc?" It was the real fun of driving, and it has happened to me again, even though I got my first license in 1953! It is so good to feel the road and manipulate the gears again (I have the 6 speed). And it is a vehicle that you can be proud to own. By the way, my paint job suffered no permanent scratches, probably due to the clear coat on the paint, and I had put a double layer of Zymol wax on before we left for the trip. In my poor, pathetic, addled mind I feel like I am back in the old days, and I am loving every single moment of it.

Of course, I had to disinfect the ice chest once I returned home. Whooooooffff...bad. very bad.

This old dog learned some new tricks, and I can't wait to go again and be with the most wonderful gathering of family and new friends such as I just encountered with the Northwest Overland Society. My "Camping Kit" is ready in the garage for the next trip so let's go!



Dan and Amy Cronin, Lucia and Cody, and Grandpa Rich as we break camp on the last day.

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CAMP JEEP 2007



Text and Photos by Ken Fidler

Since 1995, Jeep ® has sponsored an annual family oriented fun time for us Jeepers. Camp Jeep ® is a culmination of trail riding, outdoor activities, and just a plain all-out Jeep fest to satisfy anyone from novices to hard core Jeepers. This is an exclusive treat for all Jeep owners where you can hang out with fellow Jeepers and the Chrysler employees that help design and build our wonderful toys.

I've attended four Camp Jeeps over the years, and each time it has been a great experience. This year, my son and I went together to do a little father-son bonding and just get away from the daily grind of our jobs. For 2007, Camp Jeep was held at the Oak Ridge Estates near Charlottesville in Virginia. This is the sixth time the event has come to Virginia, and there are many reasons this has been a popular spot to hold Camp Jeep. Besides some of the wonderful scenery, the Oak Ridge Estates is one of the few places that can hold the close to 10,000 attendees and 2,000

Jeep vehicles. The area also has an array of off-road trails that range from teaching the novice 4-wheeler to challenging hard-core Jeepers with their heavily modified rigs. The area is also big enough for Jeep to build several obstacle courses to let you try out a new Jeep vehicle, or if you are real daring, you can take your own vehicle for a big splash in a special 'playground' while on-lookers cheer you on.

Camp Jeep is not just about off-highway adventure. Besides offering a course that allows you to play with the latest Jeep models, a course that will give you a taste of the vehicles off-road abilities, you can also open your wallet and spend money on Jeep-ware and show off the latest Jeep



fashions on your body, or buy Mopar accessories for your expensive toy that sits in the Jeep parking lot with the other 2,000+ cousins. Jeep also brings you a tent with some classic Jeep vehicles, as well as a few concepts. Personally, I found the regular parking area had more interesting Jeep vehicles than what is in the tent.

One important feature of Camp Jeep is the ability for Jeep enthusiasts to talk directly with the engineers who design and build the vehicles. I give credit to Jeep for allowing this type of interaction. This is actually a bit risky, but in the long run, it's a great opportunity for us to tell what we like and don't like to the men and women that build the beast. The roundtables are based on the type of vehicle, but the Wrangler ones are the best. Because Wrangler owners are the more colorful Jeep owners, the Wrangler roundtables are more outspoken and controversial, and the engineers know this.

The Engineering roundtables are also a great way to get an insight into future directions of the Jeep brand. Camp Jeep 2007 occurred after the divorce between Daimler and Chrysler, and I got a sense of relief from the engineers. In the past, it seemed the engineers felt the Daimler arm had restricted them, but this time it was as if they were looking at some new directions.

Hints at this year's event are changes to the stability control system to improve up-hill/down-hill control and trailer hauling. The new Wrangler soft-top also appears to be giving the product engineers some trouble as they are trying to find an easier way to communicate to the owner how to raise and lower the top, especially with respect to the sun-rider portion of the top.

This year the main subject was not so much about, "Should Jeep offer a diesel option on the Wrangler?" Rather, it was more a question of "How much would we be willing to pay for the alternate engine choice?" Another tidbit is that Chrysler is toying with the idea of replacing the classic 4WD handle with an electronic switch. This was a "big thumbs down" in the group I was with, but don't be surprised if this makes it into future versions of the Grand Cherokee and Liberty.

One of the questions asked at the roundtable was what we like/don't like about the current body style on the JK. A big discussion then ensued on how much the Wrangler looks like a Hummer, and vice-a-versa. This gave me the opportunity to query about the JT. At Camp Jeep, right outside the main entrance to the Engineer tent, was the JT concept pickup truck built off the 4-door Wrangler platform right next to an AEV Brute.

I was fortunate in that one of the future product planners was there, and after the roundtable was over, we had a nice conversation about the JT. The engineer was open in letting me know about some of the issues in bringing this vehicle to production. Besides some of the obvious problems in marketing a



small truck, the engineers are also faced with what to do about a spare tire and that darn tailgate.

If you have ever looked at the photos of the JT, the spare tire sits inside the pickup bed, and uses up most of the space. The tail-gate is a swing out design much like the current JK. The spare will not fit underneath the vehicle because of the fuel tank and muffler locations. Putting the tire on the tail gate prevents them from using a drop down design. I suggested placing the spare along the side like the Gladiator concept, but that reduces the pick-up bed capacity, and could restrict what size spare you could allow.

I'm sure the engineers have a lot more ideas up their sleeves, but the JT will have to battle the bean-counters and find a way to be profitable before this vehicle sees the light of day. Before the 2-door Wrangler Unlimited (LJ) was produced, several prototypes appeared at previous Camp Jeep's, and the campers helped Jeep in ironing out some of the details. Who knows, maybe the JT will become reality in a few years.

Camp Jeep also provides opportunities to experience other outdoor adventures. This year, there was the usual rock climb and BMX bike courses. At my age, I skipped these! There was also a large tank for those that wanted to try out scuba diving.

In the past, I think Camp Jeep offered more variety in this area. In the past, you could go out

on kayak excursions, lazy river tubing, try out ATVs, or go on special walking trails. At my first Camp Jeep experience, we went white water rafting. In keeping costs down and dealing with safety concerns, sadly some of these challenges are no longer offered.

I mentioned earlier that Jeep set up special courses for us to test out brand new Jeeps. This brings to mind a minor complaint. In the early days of Camp Jeep, they had similar test courses but they were run a little differently. Originally these were referred to as Jeep 101, and the co-pilot assigned to you was an experienced Jeep or Chrysler employee that actually explained off-highway techniques.

Many of the attendees at Camp Jeep are newbies to off-highway adventure, and a little experience before going out on the trails would have been a big plus. As our trail guide said, "Don't under estimate the capability of your Jeep, but don't over estimate your abilities." On the more advanced rides, I saw a few vehicles that had to be pulled out, or even worse, abandoned until a tow vehicle could come and remove them from the trail. I'm sure these owners had less than an enjoyable experience, although it was entertaining for the rest of us.

You can also spend part of your day just being entertained. Once again, Tony Hawk and his band of crazies performed wild stunts on skate-

boards and BMX bikes. Even though we had to sit out in the bleachers with the sun baking us alive, these acrobats gave us a great show.

This year there were also two concerts not just one, but unfortunately my son and I did not attend either of them. Neither one of us is a country music fan, so the Tim McGraw concert was not on our agenda. The B-52's were the closing act for Camp Jeep, but because the camp was closed late in the final day due to bad weather, many of us never went back in the evening to see the concert. These concerts are held outdoors, so bring a lawn chair if you want to be comfortable. For the low price of Camp Jeep admission (which is per vehicle, not per person), you get your money's worth with the trails and entertainment provided at these events.

Hopefully you realize that Camp Jeep has a lot to offer a family for a vacation. My son and I also took part in enjoying the beautiful mountain scenery, and drove around just to see some of the breathtaking views. Now this is the other important factor in going to a Camp Jeep, and it is the fun of being with your family on a real vacation. When I was young, each year my parents would take all of us on a trip to visit some part of the country. I have great memories of the family planning and organizing so we could get the most out of the trip. Sadly for many, the family road trips are being replaced by over-priced excursions to theme parks. I think many folks are





missing out on seeing our country and enjoying time with their families.

The main reason to go to Camp Jeep is the off-highway experience. Throughout the three days, there were multiple excursions out into the back areas of trails with experienced guides. You never really know what will happen, even on the simpler 'scenic' courses. If you have never taken your Jeep off-highway, this is a great opportunity. I usually start by going on one simple trail to get my feet wet (sometimes literally).



This year on the scenic trail we had a middle aged woman who had a brand new JK. She was quite nervous, but she did the right thing, and she asked the trail guides a lot of questions. I ran into her later, and she was hooked. She had one of the best times of her life, and she was headed out on another trail with her friends.

What I like is the trails are set up and organized so that you are in a small group of 20 or so other Jeepers. Your assigned trail guide comes and visits everyone, and gets an idea of who is in the group and what kind of mix of vehicles will be on the trail. The trail guides are excellent in working with everyone and making sure we all have a great time.

My son is not a morning person, and I signed us up for the 7am trail rides (I'm just a mean guy sometimes). This meant we needed to be in our trail line-up around 6:30am, and our motel was over forty minutes from the sight. I feared I would be dragging my son out of bed, but to my surprise, he was always ready to go with a big grin on his face.

We would get in early and check-in and meet our trail leaders. While you wait to 'launch' and head out to your trail, you have an opportunity to check out your fellow campers' rigs and talk about Jeeps. This is an opportunity to see what new upgrades you can buy for your baby, and chat with someone that has them. What a great way to see if that item you saw in the latest Jeep mag is really worth your hard earned cash.

Last year I had my wife with me, and after seeing some of the cool stuff on all the other Jeeps, she kept asking when I was going to get some of these upgrades for our Jeep. Going to Camp Jeep can help you convince your spouse to let you get those new goodies!

I spotted a few Jeeps with the end caps that Jeep used on the last year of the TJ. These end caps replaced those clunky 'balloons' on standard bumpers, and made even the stock bumpers look good. No more banging those stupid plastic bombs from getting bent up while on the trails. You can guess what I bought as soon as I got back home.

I mentioned earlier the special 'playground' course to let your Jeep play in. My son kept prodding me to sign-up, but I balked and for good reason. We sat and watched a few times, and the tow rig kept quite busy. One side of the trail had a deep valley dug in, and they filled it with water. The Virginia clay, when it hit your Jeep, was more like glue. It was awesome to see the red-clay based water fly all over, but a few paid for this thrill. A few unlucky ones got this red muck all over the engine, and in some cases this killed the engine or disabled some of the electronics. In town, a smart owner of a car wash put up a big sign, "Got Mud?" Trust me; he did a lot of business that week.

All in all, whether you are new to your Jeep or an old hand, Camp Jeep is well worth your time. This is a great way for Jeep to educate its best sales people – which are us. Nothing against the salesmen at the Chrysler-Jeep store, but most of them know nothing about break over angles or what lockers are. Camp Jeep is where we current Jeep owners go to learn about the latest products and tell our friends about new Jeeps. I bet many of us have sold more Jeeps to new customers than the regular Jeep sales force. Here is hoping Jeep continues to offer Camp Jeep to us loyal owners and future enthusiasts of Jeep products.



So, I Had a Talk With My Jeep

Text and photos by Mark D. Stephens

When Brooke told me she was pregnant, I considered this crazy thought for a long, stressful 24 hours: sell the TJ, cash out. Put the backseat in, give it a good wax job, and prepare to send it off with a college girl who likes it since it's red and convertible. The horror. For a last hurrah I'd have to tell her, "Be sure to change the snorkel fluid once every 3000 miles"

I settled into the idea, though, but didn't dare think or talk about it while driving my Jeep. She wouldn't like that. She'd come up with hundreds of reasons, mostly nostalgic, why I should keep her.

"Maybe I can get a Commander," I thought while mowing the grass. Yes, I could picture it: tricking out an XK and doing it right the first time: rock sliders, 33" BFGs on a set of AEV wheels, hidden winch, rear tire carrier, remote reservoir shocks, plenty of auxiliary lighting connected to a dual battery system that would also power a 45-quart freezer/fridge. Outfit an on-board water tank for showering, too. I'd be the coolest dad around with a sweetly modded Jeep Commander that was well used in the Mexican deserts and the trails of the southwest. We could pack in a whole litter of adventure kids and live for weeks. Tug a Chaser Adventure Trailer behind it and set off on a land cruise to the Tetons, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks. A pair of double kayaks could fit on top, and mountain bikes on the trailer.

I shared my thoughts with my wife, who just had to remind me, "Awwww, Mark. You can't get rid of that Jeep. We honeymooned in it remember? Camped at Joshua Tree, went to Yosemite and Zion. And all those times we went rock climbing around Arizona, kayaking in Mexico. Plus you've put so much work into it. You can't get rid of it now. Keep it. You love that Jeep."



One thing she didn't mention, yet something of which I was very aware: my two Jeep-owning best friends would have killed me if I put it up for sale. Hang me upside down by my toes and beat me with a rusty winch cable.

Then, on the way to work one morning, air drumming along with my MP3 player plugged into my ears, I heard someone yelling at me.

"Hey!"

I turned to my right and spied an air conditioning service truck in the next lane over and a young man practically hanging out the driver's window waving his hat at me. *What did I do, forget to screw on the gas cap again?*

"Dude!" He shouted and bounced his head up and down, laughing with joy. "That Jeep looks insane, bro! Sweet job!" He was serious and shaking his thumbs-up wildly.

He cracked me up, and I had no choice. I laughed aloud and waved at him, and responded, "Thanks, bro." I was thanking him for the wake up call really, not for complimenting the ride.

The reason for my change of heart is not for the attention I get with this vehicle. It's about hearing that internal wake up call: *Hey man, why fix what ain't broke?* The TJ's been good to me, so I sauntered out to the garage on a Sunday afternoon to explain this to the Jeep. I had to have a discussion with her, let her know about my revelation – no, inspiration – to keep her around, and dive into a new phase of the TJ project. In the interest of good karma, one ought to treat one's car like a buddy; I don't think you can get 300,000 miles out of someone whom you don't respect, love.

As I stepped into the garage, I was overcome with guilt – it was like the Jeep knew what was going on the whole time.

"Mark," I heard, "you know, 5 years old isn't that bad. 95,000 miles. And I think you owe me a little something after all those miles."

"Anything you want, but I'm on a budget."

"Well, I've got some things fading and looking tattered. Like my fender flares and wheels. Especially the wheels. They're original and all scratched. What can you do for me?"

"New paint sound okay?"

"Deal. Don't you think I could use a new top, too? I like the bikini, but I've been wearing it for over a year and a half straight."

"We'll see about that one. How about a rack up there? Want a new rack? I've got a great idea for our next camping trips. You can be my support vehicle on an extended bike tour."

"A rack, huh? Sure, Mark, I'd like that. But I want a good one."

Thus launched the roof rack challenge. Did you know that there are at least 11 commercial roof racks available for Jeep TJs? That's a lot to consider. So I penned my absolute conditions for a rack:

1. Compatible with the ARB snorkel position
2. An attached basket not necessary, nor desired
3. 150 lbs capacity or more, yet lightweight
4. Hinged supports for easy rag top removal/install



Only two racks battled 1000 with my four specifications: the Olympic 4x4 Sports Rack (901), and the Congo Cage by Kargo Master. I ended up with the Sports Rack by Olympic 4x4 in this cool eco-color they call "Sierra Chrome." Pardon the word 'chrome' as it's really a fancy-looking gray. For it's lightweight, yet durable construction and hinged rear supports, I thought this was a perfect rack for the adventurer who brings along kayaks, canoes, snowboards, or bikes.

Fixed up with an Eezi-Awn roof tent and a Yakima SprocketRocket bike carrier, I'm ready to take off for some isolated cycling. I'm thinking of riding a length of the Mogollon Rim, a wall of rock that separates the Colorado Plateau from high desert between Arizona and New Mexico. My Jeep smiles at me each morning and asks, "When are we going?"



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

If you're looking for engaging content about Jeep and outdoor adventure, you've come to the right place! JP'Frees' are inspired by lifestyles off the beaten path, and we encourage anyone with a story to tell or a photograph to share to submit them to JPFreek. Who knows, we may very well use your story and/or photo(s) in an upcoming issue, and your submissions will be rewarded with some really cool JPFreek gear including decals and t-shirts. So what are you waiting for? Submit your adventures to JPFreek at: mystory@jpfreek.com



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“Worlds Longest Slot Canyon” – Buckskin Gulch

Text and photos by Bo Beck & Tanya Milligan of Zionnational-park.com

Buckskin Gulch in Utah is an exceptionally long and spectacular slot canyon that lures hikers into the relatively new and adrenaline pumping pursuit of canyoneering. Touted as the “longest slot canyon in the world”, Buckskin Gulch is twenty-one miles from start to finish. The extreme narrow passage twists like a snake, opening up here and there, letting sunlight bake the canyon floor before it again constricts and darkens. Head out for an overnight backpack, hike the complete route in a day, or partake in a peek and retreat from the Wire Pass Trailhead to the confluence of Buckskin Gulch. A permit is required, but for day hikes, you can obtain one at the trailhead. Overnight trips require a permit obtained either online or from the BLM office in Kanab, St. George or the Paria Contact Station.

At a Glance

Distance: Complete route is 21 miles. The confluence of Wire Pass and Buckskin and back is 3.5 miles.

Equipment: Water shoes, sun protective clothing, extra socks, emergency supplies including bivy gear, dry bags, water purification or filtration method, 50’ of rope, harness and descent device.

Difficulty: Strenuous. When the authors hiked this canyon last, there was one obstacle that required 40’ of rope to negotiate. Depending on the time of year and how wet the season has been, wading and swimming in very cold water might be necessary.

Trail Access: Year-round but if the road is wet or there is melting snow, it could be impassable. A 4WD vehicle is suggested.

Best Season: Early spring when it is not as hot though it is a year-round destination.

Buckskin Gulch via Wire Pass to the Whitehouse Trailhead – From Kanab drive 44 miles east on Highway 89. A little less than a half-mile after crossing the Paria River, turn right, heading toward the BLM Paria River Contact Station. Follow this dirt road 2.25 miles to the Whitehouse Campground and parking area. Leave a vehicle and return to Highway 89. Drive 4.5 miles back toward Kanab, looking for the House Rock Valley Road turnoff. Turn and drive 8.5 miles to the Wire Pass Trailhead.

Wire Pass - Walk east, across the road, and follow

the “trail” to the register. The beaten path continues east, following the wash. Continue east, ignoring the sign directing hikers toward the “Wave.” At 1.3 miles, sandstone walls enclose dramatically, and then open up again as travel continues toward the confluence with Buckskin. Soon the canyon constricts enough for hikers to barely slip through before the confining stone opens once again, exposing the sky above. At the confluence with Buckskin Gulch (1.75 miles) you will want to look for the Wire Pass petroglyphs at the base of the large alcove on the right.

Buckskin Gulch – As you enter Buckskin, dramatic lighting haunts the slender crevice of the twisted wind and water-carved slot canyon, allowing for spectacular photography during the next 12 miles. Almost 8 miles from the start of the hike, and a bit over 6 miles into Buckskin Gulch, there is an escape on the left side (north) known as the Middle Trail. Walk up the steep, sandy ramp a short distance to see two sheep drawings etched on a small panel. Return to the canyon floor where 50’ down canyon you should see weathered petroglyphs on the left wall. Walk 100’ downstream from the exit, and then look upstream and 100’ vertically above the faded petroglyphs to see a single human figure deeply etched into the darker stone. Around the corner, to the left are several more drawings. This is a good place to turn around and return to the Wire Pass Trailhead if you do not plan on hiking through to the Whitehouse Trailhead. Beyond this point there is a major obstacle and, depending on the current condition of the canyon, you may be required to wade or swim.

If you are doing the through-hike, continue down canyon where roughly 4 miles from the Middle Trail, a large group of boulders make a formidable

obstacle. To the left side is a 20’ vertical drop, and “moki steps” carved into the rock. In the middle of the boulder pile is a 15’ down-climb, where a rope can be threaded as a handline or rappel line. Remember that floods have formed this canyon and the nature of the canyon can change quickly and dramatically. Be prepared for circumstances not described. About a mile past the obstacle, water usually seeps from the canyon floor where you can refill water bottles; however, don’t count on the water always being there. Just before reaching the river you will see campsites above the flood plain, on both the left and right sides of the somewhat open wash. If you are spending the night, this is where you will make camp.

Exit - The Paria River enters from the left. Once there, turn upstream (left) at which point it is 7 miles to the Whitehouse Trailhead and your awaiting vehicle. Tall sandstone cliffs line the path, and a towering arch is dead ahead. The farther north you travel, the wider the canyon walls become until they finally disappear. Soft sand at the end of this route makes it difficult to hike this route in one day. This should only be done by those in excellent condition.

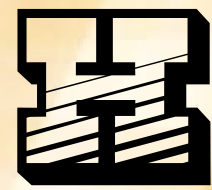
Flash flooding is a very real danger in this canyon.

Contact the BLM for weather and canyon conditions before attempting this route.

Credits: Photos, coordinates, trail and canyoneering information by Zion Park Search and Rescue veteran team member and Outdoor Outlet Manager, Bo Beck, and www.zionnational-park.com author, Tanya Milligan.

Disclaimer: Although we have tried to ensure that the content of this article is as accurate as possible, circumstances change and, therefore, under no circumstances shall the authors and publisher be liable to you or anyone else for any damages arising out of the use of this article. The user assumes all risk associated with the use of this article.





Paul Erickson's 1997 TJ Wrangler

2.5L 4 banger (and all that implies)

- Dana 30 Front with Lockright / Dana 35 Rear with Yukon 35 shafts and ARB locker
- 4.88 Gearing
- AX-5 Manual Transmission (5 speed)
- 33" TrXuS MT's on Canyons and SpiderTrax Spacers
- Omix fender flares (OEM style)
- Home made quick disconnects for soft top hardware
- Bestop Safari / Jammer / Duster combination (Black)
- Bestop Soft top (Black)
- Replaced radiator

Suspension/Lift - from DPG Offroad

- OME 2.5" HD lift (with Unlimited rear shocks)
- 3/4" spacers in front for leveling
- 1.25" JKS BL
- 1" JKS BMML
- JKS Bar Pin Eliminators
- JKS front Adjustable Track Bar
- JKS Quicker Disconnects for the front suspension

Bumpers/Armor/Recovery

- Jeeperman bumper
- Front with brush guard/light bar
- Rear (w/ tire carrier)
- D-shackles front and rear
- Warn 9.5ti Winch
- Toys by Troy Ultimate Rockers
- Toys by Troy Steering Skid
- Toys by Troy side sliders/corner armor
- Kilby Gas Tank Skid
- Homebrew CO2 setup (10lb)
- 48" Hi-lift Jack

Lighting

- Added OEM fogs
- IPF H4 lighting upgrade
- IPF 968 driving/fog lights
- 35W Backup/utility lights on back
- LED taillights
- Light'n Boltz lighting for license plate
- Blacked out light rings (Krylon Fusion)



Convenience/Interior/Electronics

- Mirror relocation brackets
- Magellan Meridian Platinum GPS with RAM mount
- Hand throttle
- Home made trunk (under the duster)
- Mopar / Jeep Black / Tan Seat Covers
- Added bumpstops on hood where it meets windshield
- Camaro rear view mirror with map lights
- Added second switch bezel for 6 Carling / Contura switches and CB integration
- Alpine HU with XM and iPod integration
- Alpine / Kicker amplifier setup
- Edge Auto soundbar with Kicker 6x9 (polyfilled)
- MB Quart 5.25's in dash
- Kicker 8" sub in Tuffy security console
- Cobra 75WXST CB with Firestik 4' antenna on Jeeperman tire carrier
- External speaker for CB
- Homebrew Fuse #4 bypass switch
- Various performance enhancing decals under the hood and on the side

And the list is going to include (hopefully):

- Roll cage, upgraded brakes, 33 Engineering bellyup, SYE, adjustable control arms

Originally, I purchased this Jeep from a Lt. Colonel at Edwards Airforce Base in 2003. It was meant for my 16 year old daughter as a commuter car, and I had NO intention of driving it off-highway. I found it was missing a stock sway bar up front, and my daughter nearly tipped it over (the dealer 'missed' it during their pre-purchase inspection and I didn't know a thing about Jeeps at that point). Anyway, we eventually put her in a 2 door coupe and I decided to keep the TJ as a toy and winter driver for Southern California's mountains in the winter (yes, it snows in SoCal).

At that point, I started learning about Jeeps and what they could do, and I became very focused on making a decent daily driver and decent wheeler using parts and such that I could install myself (for the most part) as I have ZERO fab skills. Most of the work on it occurred after I moved from Cali to Alabama, and I think I succeeded in making it a decent road warrior that can easily hold its own off-highway in the mud of the southeast.

The combination of skids, armor, and lift has made this Jeep VERY stout and comfortable at the same time. I've even laid it over and despite a destroyed windshield frame and fender bend enhancement, it was still mechanically sound.

Either way, it has been a BLAST to own, work on, and play with. I've learned more about vehicles working on this Jeep than I ever had previously!

Do you have a Jeep ® vehicle that is so cool that you'd like to share it with JPFreek readers? If so, send us your story and high resolution photos to: editor@jpfreek.com

Who knows, you and your rig just might be in the "Freek Show" of a future issue of JPFreek Adventure Magazine!

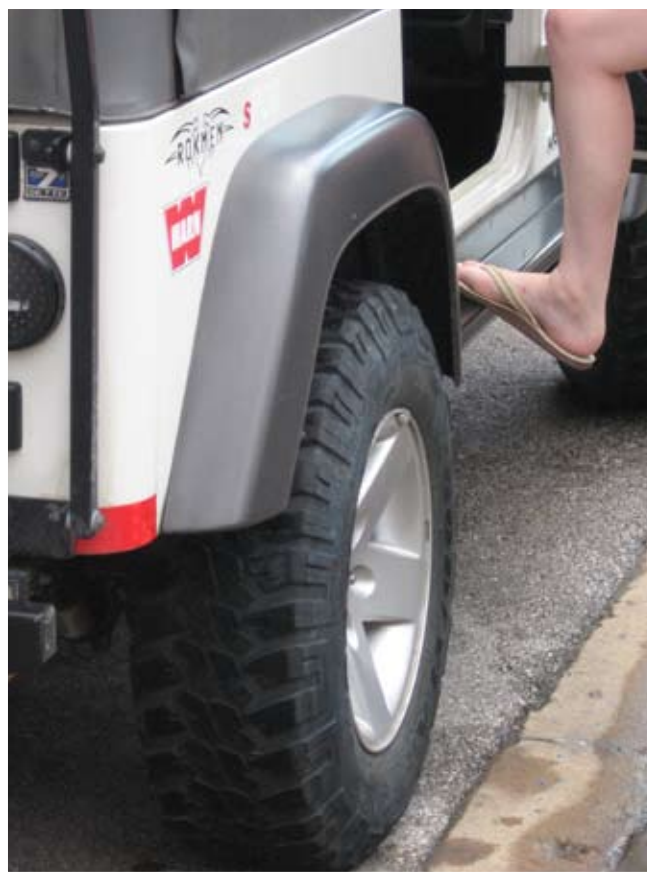
ROKMEN Proves Step Slider Protection is Industry Best

In the world of Jeep® armor protection, there are players and there are pretenders. Rokmen Manufacturing has been a player in the Jeep armor industry since 2002. After reviewing their latest creation, the TJ Step Slider, the bar has been raised for quality, functionality, and all-purpose protection.

Offered in both a bare metal and black powder coated version, Rokmen describes the TJ Step Slider as being able to *“not only protect your body from trail damage but also protect against road debris encountered in the urban jungle.”* This description only scratches the surface as these Step Sliders truly offer the best of both worlds: off-highway armament against any extreme terrain, and on-road functionality allowing for easier vehicle entry and functional protection for the urban dweller. In essence, this is the perfect product for those who enjoy playing hard on the trails while still using their vehicle as a daily driver.

Our two-part test began in the urban setting of Houston, Texas; the 4th largest city in the United States. Bustling with over two million people, Houston is nestled between Buffalo Bayou and Galveston’s gulf coast 40 miles away. Notoriously known as having some of the worst paved streets of all the major U.S. cities, it was only appropriate that we put Rokmen’s TJ Step Sliders to the test in this concrete jungle. The uniform, simple step design provides an esthetically pleasing flow along the side panel that also makes the vehicle easier to enter and exit. This is an important feature because getting in and out of the vehicle can sometimes be an adventure in itself, especially with young passengers or family pets. The “step” on the TJ Step Sliders helps eliminate this by integrating step functionality with protection. Speaking of protection, Rokmen’s design proved superb as potholes, rebar, and road debris stood no chance against the CNC laser cut and bent 3/16” cold roll steel of the TJ Step Sliders.

For those who don’t understand the significance of “cold roll steel,” here it is: cold roll steel is almost TWICE the strength of hot roll steel and contains far less impurities. As an added bonus, the TJ Step Sliders have TIG welded internal frame reinforcements, with TIG welded end-caps, which later proved invaluable while testing the sliders off-highway. In all, the TJ Step Sliders’ real-world functionality proved true in an environment of concrete and traffic debris.



An urban setting that bustles with over two million people, Houston’s concrete jungle proved to be an appropriate setting to test Rokmen’s TJ Step Sliders. Potholes, rebar, and road debris stood no chance against the quality of Rokmen’s TJ Step Sliders. Rokmen’s step design makes the TJ Step Sliders “real world functional” by making entry and exit easier for young passengers, four-legged friends, or even your significant other.



After trudging across downtown Houston's dilapidated street system, the second part of our test ensued at General Sam's Off-Road Park in Huntsville, Texas. Located approximately 85 miles north of downtown Houston, General Sam's is the perfect proving ground for Jeep enthusiasts who are looking for an atypical off-highway adventure featuring hard mud, clay, and water crossings. 706 acres of trails are nestled in thick pine trees and mulberry bushes, and the terrain, while challenging, was no match for the TJ Step Sliders. Thick, compacted rock and clay slammed into the TJ Step Sliders along the undercarriage and on the side panels. Once again, the TIG welded internal frame reinforcements provided unparalleled stability. Full underbody protection made wheeling over rock and clay a walk in the park. About the only thing the TJ Step Sliders didn't protect us from was the water and mud that baked onto the hood of our Rubicon from the Texas heat.

The versatility of Rokmen's TJ Step Slider armor protection makes it the perfect choice for the all-around Jeep enthusiast. With clean, smooth welds and a functional yet simple design, the TJ Step Sliders work wonderfully in the big city and on the trails. Rokmen has established a benchmark for quality that truly sets this product apart from its competitors. The craftsmanship is second to none, and at a price that rivals most every other Step Slider in this crowded market, Rokmen has jumped from being a player in the Jeep armor protection market to a true leader in the industry.

• For more information about Rokmen's TJ Step Sliders and all Rokmen Manufacturing products, contact Rokmen via telephone, email, or the web at:

Phone – 303-907-6303

Email – info@rokmen.com

Website – www.ROKMEN.com



Step Sliders - Available for 97-06' TJ Wrangler

- Formed design provides a usable step and protects the side of vehicle from road and trail debris
- Constructed from 3/16" steel – Laser Cut and CNC bent
- Ends of step are capped and are fully TIG welded and sanded smooth
- Two Internal form supports per slider for extreme strength – also TIG welded
- Complete underbody coverage – attaches to body NOT to body mounts
- Includes yellow zinc coated backing plates for inside of cab, 2nd plane internal reinforcements also available.
- Stainless Steel and Grade 8 Hardware – increased corrosion resistance
 - o Yellow zinc performs 40% better than other coatings in salt testing
 - o Countersunk hardware provides smooth side and bottom, nothing to snag on trail obstacles
- Compatible with all known body lifts and compatible with most tube fenders

What makes ROKMEN products better?

- Unmatched design, attention to detail, fit and finish, and overall build quality
- TIG welding – requires a craftsman who is both experienced and skilled at their craft, not just a MIG monkey who can point and pull the trigger.
- Details in step sliders make it better than the competition:
 - o Fully TIG welded end caps and internal supports
 - o Mounting locations on side of vehicle – mounting hole located under "Jeep" is not included with most other manufacturers parts. Rokmen includes a 3 1/2" long stainless bolt to close the large gap commonly found between the body and slider.

General Sam's thick, compacted rock and clay slammed into the TJ Step Sliders with vengeance; however, the TIG welded internal frame reinforcements provided unparalleled stability with full underbody protection. Whether it's rock, clay, or various types of road debris, Rokmen's TJ Step Sliders are up for the challenge...and then some.





In 1993, Jeep ® released the first edition of the Grand Cherokee family of vehicles with its ZJ model. Coupling legendary Jeep ® off-highway capabilities with a smoother highway ride and a larger, more luxurious cabin interior than its brother (the Jeep ® Cherokee), the Grand Cherokee was a far more capable offering than the Ford ® Explorer released two years earlier.

Jeep ® later improved upon its original design of the ZJ with the evolution of the WJ Grand Cherokee in 1999. Featuring a larger engine option with the 5.9L V8, as well as an increased gear ratio and other amenity upgrades, the WJ became a staple of Chrysler's commitment to capable full-size vehicles. The evolution continued and in 2005, the WK Grand Cherokee would push the envelope with features that made it a "Trail Rated" vehicle. Capabilities comparable to those of its cousin, the Jeep ® TJ, further solidified the heritage of the Jeep ® Grand Cherokee.

The continual expansion of the Grand Cherokee has continued with the introduction of a 3.0 L CRD diesel engine for the 2008 model year. Chrysler's dedication to offering a highly capable family of vehicles is reflected throughout the history of the Grand Cherokee, and this is the focus of JPFreek Adventure Magazine's first vehicle photo essay featuring Jeep's Grand Cherokee.

A Grand Perspective

Larkspur, Colorado is home to Bryan Maine and his 2005 WK Grand Cherokee. It is an amazing example of a highly capable off-highway vehicle, and the rig features the following mods:

- Magnaflow Exhaust system
- SuperLift 4" lift with SSR's
- American Racing Crush Rims
- 33" BFG AT KO's
- 4xGuard Rear HC Skid Plate
- 4xGuard Front HC Skid Plate
- 4xGuard Rock Rails
- 4xGuard CB Antenna Mount
- Hi-Lift Jack/Rack Mount
- Shovel & Ax/Rack Mount
- Defender Roof Rack
- 2 Hella Rally 4000's
- 2 Hella Rally 4000's w/CELIS
- Galaxy 88 CB w/Firestick Antenna





Jerod Beam's ZJ conquers the rocky terrain in the southern U.S.



Aaron Lockhart's 1995 ZJ takes a rest while on 12 Mile Road in Buelah, Colorado. Aaron's rig features the following mods:

- 5" ProComp Lift
- 32" BFG A/Ts on Outlaw IIs
- Fuel Injection Performance Kit
- ProComp PreRunner Bar/Lights
- TransGo Shift Kit
- Teraflex TB

Mike Ward's 1998 ZJ flexes its muscles on "Sit Up 'n Beg" in Kentucky. The vehicle features:

- Skids (Engine, Oil, T-Case, Gas, Front Ica's), Kevin's LP-1 sliders
- Rusty's hooks, Class III Hitch
- RE 4.5" SuperFlex lift, JKS disconnects, RE Mono-tube shocks, and adjustable track bars
- TrXus 33x12.5-15, RC's 15X8 3.75"BS
- CB, Hi-Lift jack, tube doors, trimmed front fenders



William VanderToolen proves that WJs with Long Arm kits don't need to use the marina at Bear Lake, UT. His 1999 WJ features:

- 6.5" Rockcrawler Long Arm Kit
- 35" 315x75x16 Goodyear MT/Rs
- K&N and Flowmaster



Nick Pillon, a member of the North American Grand Cherokee Association, shows off his 1999 WJ featuring:

- 4.5" Rusty's Lift
- JKS Adj. Trac Bar
- JKS Quicker-Disconnects
- Kevin's Off-Road Dual Old Man
- Emu Steering Stabilizer Kit
- Kevin's Off-Road LP1 Rock Sliderz
- Custom Flowmaster 40 exhaust with 3" cut-out
- K&N FIPK Cold-Air Intake
- All factory skid plates

Russ Livingston, President of 4xGuard, takes on the Hell's Revenge trail near Moab, UT in his highly modified WK. The vehicle features a number of mods including:

- 4-inch SuperLift Suspension
- 34" Goodyear MT/Rs
- Walker Evans Streetlock wheels
- Custom skid plates by 4xGuard
- Rock rails by 4xGuard
- Prototype grill guard by 4xGuard
- Magnaflow muffler
- PIAA lights
- AFE cold air system



James Chatary's 2000 WJ Grand Cherokee sports some killer mods including:

- 2" Budget Boost
- Skyjacker Hydro 7000 shocks
- 31" BFG All Terrains
- Rock Crawler steel wheels
- Surco Safari Rack
- Hella 500 Off-Road Lights



Climbing to the Top of the Tooth

A WEEKEND ON
EL DIENTE PEAK

Text and Photos by Jeff Haley

This past June, three friends and I headed to the San Miguel range in the San Juan Mountains just south of Telluride, Colorado, home to three 14ers. It was a weekend of adventure that included steep snow, encounters with a bear, and some really powerful chili.

Our goal for the weekend was to summit El Diente Peak via the North face snow route from Navajo Basin which is accessed by the Dunton Road. El Diente means "The Tooth" in Spanish, and it is properly named due to the steep faces that lead up to a rather narrow summit. After summiting El Diente, we hoped to have a summit bid on the other two 14,000 foot peaks in the area: Mt. Wilson and Wilson Peak. Due to some legal issues surrounding the standard Silver

Pick Road approach to the peaks, we chose an alternate route that involved a four mile hike into Navajo Basin and allowed a base camp at Navajo Lake. This approach allowed access to all three peaks and was the fastest approach to our ultimate goal, the North face of El Diente Peak.

The weekend started with a 6 hour drive from our home in Colorado Springs that included a 30 minute wait at a fast food restaurant in Montrose, and a good laugh at a sign for the "Beer Barn" that claimed "Cheap Beer." Once we arrived in the Telluride area, we got our first glimpse at Wilson Peak that for years was featured on the Coors Beer cans in its full glory. We knew we were close. We finally reached the Dunton Road and made our way to the trailhead at 8pm. We threw on the packs and were on our way to the lake when out in a meadow we spotted a large, furry friend that didn't exactly look like Yogi. When I first saw the bear, I told everyone to stop and stay still, then I reached into my pack and got out the bear spray. Fortunately after we got several fast photos, the bear ran down to a wooded area along a nearby creek. From that point on, everyone was very alert as we headed through the forest by the light of the moon and our headlamps. After another hour we safely arrived at Navajo Lake and quickly found a place for the tents. We finally climbed into our sleeping bags around midnight, and setting the alarm for 4:30am was not an easy chore.





After a few good hours of sleep we awoke at 4:30, quickly prepared for the climb and were on the trail once again by the light of the headlamps. We made quick time out of the basin and reached the base of the North face just as the sun arose around 6am. Gaining a great view of the steep North face gave us excitement and anticipation of the snow route ahead. We strapped on the crampons, grabbed the axes, and tightened the straps as we transitioned from rock to snow. The beginning of the climb was entirely snow and was very firm, allowing easy movement up the 45 to 50 degree slope. Now that the sun was up, we could see the entire Navajo

Basin and realized that just a quarter mile from us was a large, recent avalanche path. The slope that ran upward was exactly like the slope we were climbing, and we began to question the integrity of the snow underneath us. We decided to continue climbing snow along the side of a rock outcropping so that if the snow became questionable, we could transition onto the rock. From there we continued our ascent and were making good time. The weather was beautiful and the snow was still in great shape. There were a few places where we began to sink slightly and had to pull our knees up out of the snow but we finally got to within 100 feet of the ridge and

began to transition to rock once again. Just as my friend and I were resting and beginning to remove our crampons, we heard a terrible cracking and rumbling on the slope below. As we caught the view below us, we saw several basketball and TV size rocks letting loose and bouncing along the route. We yelled "rock" to the other climbers and told them to get out of the way. Fortunately, they had traversed over to a rock rib and were completely out of the way of the falling rock though they were frightened as they watched the rocks roll by.



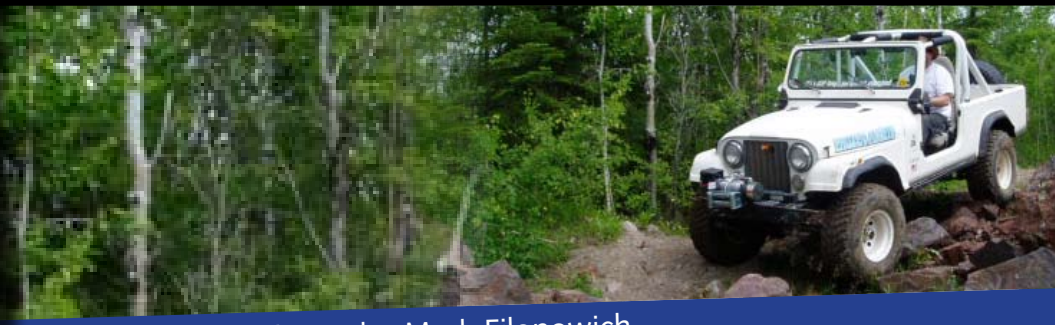
Once we reached the ridge, our first objective was complete. We had climbed the North face of El Diente during the spring snow season. The next objective was to reach the summit which was another 500 feet of climbing snow and 5th class scrambling. At this point, we had grabbed some snacks and hydrated for the final push. Two of the other climbers decided to stay on the ridge and not actually summit due to fatigue and blisters created during the initial ascent of the face. After a few snow patches and some steep traverses, we finally reached the true summit. What a feeling of accomplishment and excitement as we stood on the highest rock we could find. Once we arrived back to the other climbers on the ridge, we knew we needed to pack up and get going on the ridge traverse.

The first obstacle is a gendarme called the Organ Pipes. After reading some beta about the traverse, we knew we needed to drop to the south along the ridge and traverse around the rocks. We made it around and continued on a climbing traverse to try and gain the ridge proper once again. Unfortunately we encountered some very loose rock and had to begin down climbing to continue a traverse across the ridge. At this point, we had to stay high enough to avoid some cliff bands but not get too high into the loose rock. During this section everyone began to get very tired and the elevation was taking its toll. The whole day we were at or above 13,000 feet, and the sun was literally sucking the water from our bodies. After several breaks, we finally reached a bail out point along the ridge that consisted of down climbing steep snow to gain a rock rib that we could later down climb to a more gentle snow slope. This would allow a glissade all the way back to the basin. After sinking to our waists several times, we finally made it over to the rocks and began the descent on a mix of rock and snow. After several long glissades, we finally reached the valley floor and were back on the trail to the lake. At this point the sun was getting low in the sky and it was a beautiful sight looking up at the ridge we had just traversed.

Once we returned to camp we unpacked our bags and set our sights on dinner. The evening's meal was to be "Rootin' Tootin' Chili" as prepared by my friend over the MSR stove. I have to say it was very good and just the right amount after a day of climbing. We had finished the day by sitting around telling jokes and talking about the awesome day we had above 13,000 feet. Due to blisters, fatigue and time constraints we decided to pack up and head out the next morning. We managed to stop in Telluride and throw back a few beers to finish up the great weekend.

Climbing the "teeth" of El Diente was definitely a major accomplishment. With the combination of rock and snow, it was certainly not a trek for the light hearted but in the end, a weekend of friendship had culminated into a successful time in the San Juans, and it was another chapter to an exciting conquest of Colorado's 54 14ers.





Text and Photos by Mark Filonowich

RECOVERY TECHNIQUES FOR TRACTION FAILURE SITUATIONS, OR SIMPLY, "GETTING UNSTUCK"

My wife used to think I enjoyed getting us into "predicaments." Why else would I drive a perfectly good Jeep @ into the mud and over the rocks? She must have married a special kind of idiot who would do something so foolish again and again. What she didn't realize was that I was just honing my vehicle recovery skills. Little did she think that someday I would turn my Jeeping addiction into an interesting business with such a broad range of customers. All that practice getting stuck was training and research for one of my favorite hands-on class modules: Getting unstuck.

People often want to know what the most important recovery tool is. A winch? A good tow strap? A Hi-Lift Jack? While these are all good items to have, I honestly think your most important recovery tool is your brain and a bit of common sense. When you get stuck, you need to assess what happened and what options you have to get unstuck. Thinking carefully about those options and coming up with the best answer can mean the difference between quickly moving again, or struggling in "Stuckville" while your spouse gets more and more frustrated with you. There are many ways to get free. Your first order of business is to determine the quickest, simplest, and safest way.

If you want to get recovered, you need to plan ahead. Tow hooks properly mounted to the frame (front and rear) are required to provide a solid anchor point. A receiver hitch can be utilized, either with a shackle insert, a hook insert, or simply a looped strap fed into the receiver and held in place with an appropriate pin. Without some kind of good anchor point, there is no upside for someone else to risk damage to their own vehicle by pulling you out.

Another must have item is a tow strap with looped ends (no hooks). The loads put on a strap

when pulling a vehicle out could cause a steel hook to become a projectile capable of injuring or killing bystanders. A windshield (or seat frame) is no match for a fast moving chunk of steel.

Most of the time, your quickest and simplest solution is to hook up the strap and use a second vehicle to pull you out. After a few such rescues, it seems routine, but it requires a carefully coordinated set of steps. I recommend the stuck vehicle "helps" by slowly trying to move forward. Not wildly spinning the tires... just turning enough to assist. The towing vehicle takes up the slack and provides steady pressure. As the stuck vehicle comes free, you want to take care not to override the strap. This does not mean a helpful bystander should duck down out of the driver's line of sight...it means the driver stops and waits until the bystander has completed the task and is clearly back on safe ground.

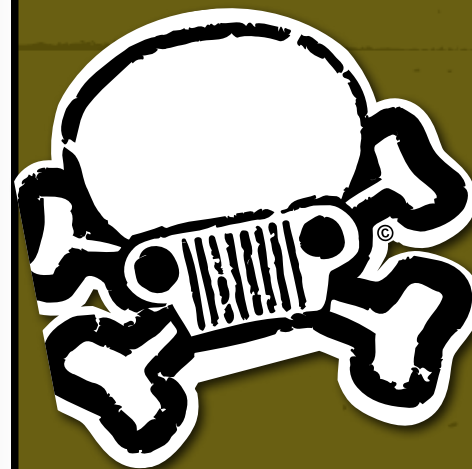
Sometimes you are faced with self-recovery. This is where you might employ your shovel or Hi-Lift Jack. The Hi-Lift Jack is a handy tool with many uses, but honestly can be quite dangerous. For many of us, it is the only way to lift a modified Jeep high enough to change a tire (or to stack rocks), but the jack needs to be handled with care. When raised, it can wobble and fall; when lowering, the handle can snap up with surprising force. It can be used as a winch, but it's painfully slow. Using a tow strap in this application is frustrating, because the strap will stretch quite a bit before you see any progress.

Follow along in the next issue, and we'll tackle that powerful extraction tool, the winch. It's an unparalleled device when used properly, but demands respect every time you unspool the cable. We'll discuss the tools required to use the winch, and techniques for safer winching.

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TRAIL OF THE SUMMER



Text and Photos by Dale Fincher

Is a Jeep® Wrangler Rubicon truly broken in without returning to the dirt, boulders and climbs from which it was sired?

Thus began plans last December to take on the mighty Rubicon Trail in California. Preparing for this trip with my fellow comrades from the Rubicon Owners Forum, we converged seven Jeeps from the four points of the compass—Rubicons all but one, to a single spot on a cool, Friday August morning at Robb's Valley Resort.

With the tools and spare tires dispersed amongst us, we were ready for anything.

DAY 1

Unlike the typical run of the Rubicon, we wanted to spend *two nights* on the trail. Originally we had planned to stage at Loon Lake, but after several recommendations for **Wentworth Springs**, we changed plans at the last minute. And we were glad that we did.

Flanked by rotted buildings from the mining years assured me of the right course. We circled the wagons, aired down, disconnected our sway bars, and said a prayer for a safe journey.

The trail was easy going at first until we met our first real fork on the road. The trail sign hung closer to the flat road on the right. But the tire tracks marked the steep granite face to the left. We walked the steeper lines and discovered this was the **Postpile**.



Bill and Robin's 33s with 3in lift performed very well.

The Postpile started with slabs, then boulders and fine obstacles. Bill and Robin Moore sat on the smallest shoes at 33 inches, but they took the hard lines with the rest of us on 35s and 37s (yes, the Rubicon can be done ably on 33s if you have proper armor protection).

All of us got an early impression of the 4-door JK when we watched Michael Wood, crawling with a prototyped Nth Degree suspension. The Jeep ® footprint was larger than the TJs and LJs the rest of us were in - yet a vehicle in command. Nimble like a buggy, Michael took his hard lines, maxing out his suspension on every side yet hardly getting tipsy...ever.

We were told the Wentworth Springs entrance would add an hour to our trip. Two hours later we were only half way over the Postpile. On a few occasions, the slabs



Michael's JK made it look easy.



My wife, Jonalyn, spotting me up an off-camber section, assisted with AiROCK.



Is this Wentworth Springs on the map?



Thor catching air.

made hard work of our trailblazing for lack of signs. We wanted to protect the land and honor the ordinance that no vehicle should be more than 25 feet off the center of the trail. So we walked ahead, looking for clues. Too many times the obvious sign, though helpful, was discouraging: trails of leaking oil, slicked up and down the valley. One day I'd like to see painted markers, like the ones in Moab to mark a clear line through the slabs.

After the Postpile, we stopped for lunch in a shady spot, retelling stories of the morning and prepping for the afternoon. Day one would be the longest of our three days. We still had six hours to go before the Buck Island Lake.

This is when Ryan Donald started to impress us with his preparedness. Need some lemonade? Ryan had four liters of it. Need some jelly? Ryan had two jars of it (Ryan, why do you have two jars of jelly?) Equipped with a new Engel fridge and gear to cover every situation, we were glad his capable rig, with 5.5" Rubicon Express lift and 37" Toyo tires, had our back.

Then we came upon the famous **Little Sluice**. It is hard to believe this used to be part of a paved road decades ago. Now Little Sluice is nothing but rocks - monster rocks. I was told that tires less than 40 inches should avoid the obstacle. But that didn't stop Jon Hale from pulling his white YJ with CJ clip,

rolling on 35s, to the front of the line. His wife, Jess, hopped to the ground with camera in hand.

The rest of us wheeled the slabs of the go-around and then watched the show.

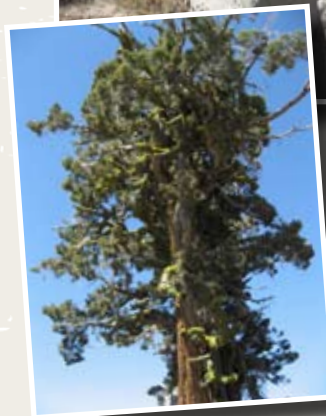
Jon pushed his Jeep ® to the limit. On one occasion he teetered on his driver side, nearly flopping, as his spotter hung onto his bumper, threw rocks under his tires, and heard Jon spurting out, "I can't see you! Can someone, PLEASE, tell me what to do?!"

The dust on the Rubicon adds a new challenge to rock crawling. It lubricates the rocks, giving the tires less grab. Jon's Goodyear MT/Rs needed a little help getting over the first hard boulder.



(Top) Our sentry in formation.... we had to stop and see what these large boulders were all about. Uh oh, Little Sluice.

(Left) A landmark: This grandfatherly tree overlooking Little Sluice.



Almost a year ago, I purchased a spotter's line for occasions such as this one. I threw it off the cliff where I perched and barked out aerial instructions. Jon made it through Little Sluice (give that man a decal!).

The rest of the first day crawled by with the Rubis walking over a thousand stray boulders. Too tired to even look at Old Sluice, we bypassed it, rolled over a thousand more boulders, and then drove over a dam (yes, a dam!). If our trip had a soundtrack, this would have been the part where the symphony crescendoed full and fast as we descended onto **Buck Island Lake**.



(Above) Our group rallied around anyone who needed a little help.

(Right) Jon's 35s are dinky in Little Sluice's boulder field.



Off-highway vehicles were strewn everywhere. Because of the new ruling for vehicles to remain near the trail, we searched for camping spots nearby. Here we stumbled upon other guys from the forum, including Jim who branded his Rubicon by replacing his hood sticker with "Fordyce."

Camping at Buck Island Lake was golden. Pristine clear, cold waters back-dropped by rock outcroppings, islands, and tree lined shores. Camp fires were not permitted but we gathered around the cook stove and lanterns to enjoy stories from the day. Steve flew in from Vancouver, BC, to run the trail with his friend Thor from SoCal, and he told tales from the great white north.

DAY 2

The next morning I insisted on rising with the sun. Tiptoeing down to the lake, I waded to an exposed slab offshore and threw some flies at the fish. Sadly, nothing came of it but the gaping silence and mystery of the lake.

By mid-morning, we caravanned to our one major obstacle for the day: **Big Sluice**.

Big Sluice isn't as bad as the name sounds, though the gully crisscrossed around boulders and trees. The challenge of the day was actually the parking. Half-way down, we encountered Disabled Sports USA enjoying a trip in the opposite direction. Roughly 30 Jeeps, buggies, and trucks carried grinning and shouting folks of all ages. They, like us, were having



(Left) I'm perched above Little Sluice as Jon begins his attempt.





(Top) Ryan on 37 Toyos doing it right up Cadillac Hill.



(Above) Finding parking on Big Sluice was the biggest challenge of the second day.



(Above) New friends finishing a great trail!

the time of their lives! Shifting to the side of the trail, we waited and waved and cheered them on.

Peppered throughout our trail ride was Brian Busch's locker trouble. Brian's friend, Drew, who flew out from Tennessee to make the run, helped investigate the problem of a blown fuse. So they robbed the horn fuse for the lockers and blew that too. From then on, after every difficult obstacle had been conquered, Brian wryly remarked, "Oh yeah, no lockers!" And guess who had all the spare fuses for Brian after that — yep, Ryan!

By lunchtime we unpacked our chairs on the slabs of the swimming hole of Rubicon Springs, then around the corner for a campsite in the trees. This proved a quieter place to camp, away from the drunken festivities of those who enjoyed noise till the wee hours of the morning.

Kevin, the manager of the property for the summer, entertained us with card tricks and tall tales of off-highway adventurers on the Rubicon. But when you talk to Kevin, beware; you never know when truth overlaps fiction. You may just end up believing in the local brown bear, Cinnamon!

The leisurely pace of days 2 and 3 helped us enjoy God's country. Without a rush, we enjoyed our Jeeps and nature all in the same trip.

That night, preparing for bed, my wife and I admired a great ARB adventure light hanging from the tree of the campsite beside ours. We had to ask about it. And of course, it was Ryan's (now I need to get one of those!).

DAY 3

After breaking camp the final morning, we got caught behind a train of brand new stock JKs. Up Cadillac Hill we followed, finding it to be not nearly as difficult as expected.

Observation Point finished off our last bits of digital film. We posed our Rubicons and our new friends round about.

Then out on Tahoe we sprang, welcomed by the deep glacier blue and pieces of civilization. We caravanned to Tahoe City for a farewell lunch and then bid one another adieu. Off we scattered to Washington,

SoCal, Tennessee, Vancouver and Colorado. A band of bothers and sisters landing in one place to make memories on the Trail of the Summer.

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LIFESTYLES OFF THE BEATEN PATH

