

2023

Caribou Loop Ride Report

Where to begin! After a lot of planning, Bill Mefford, Aaron Larson, Jacob Metcalf, Kris Larson, Shane Waters, and Ted McNeil went on the famed Caribou Loop!

In order to complete the 200+ mile loop, we all had to figure out how to fit enough food, water, food, camping gear, and everything else we would need to carry on our machines. Shane and Kris had their side by sides, and the rest of us were on ATV's.

I had spent the previous week taking out everything that I didn't think I would absolutely need. Since Shane and Kris had air compressors, mine stayed home. Anything else that not necessary stayed home as well. I had ordered some dry bags, a new tent, and had gone through my Mountain House supply and picked out my dinners. I bought fruit snacks, nut packets, peanut butter cup (not candy), and small orange juice bottles, along with Clif Bars.

A few days beforehand, we had just finished installing a rather large amount of accessories to Shane's new Maverick Trail, and he had decided to go at the last minute. While at Wal-Mart buying more supplies, we both picked up a compact cot, and I bought a sleeping bag liner as well. Kris liked the cot idea so much, he also went and bought one.

We all packed, repacked, and re-adjusted out machines to carry all our stuff. My ATV had every nook and cranny in the trunk stuffed with all my items, and my sleeping bag and sleeping pad in dry bags strapped onto the rear rack. Four gallons of fuel was in the Rotopax on the front. I was ready to go.

spent some time loading the RZR and Maverick with the five gallons of fresh spare water, finished a few small tweaks to Shane's machine, and waited for Ted to arrive.

At 11:54 in the morning, our expedition began! But first, a trip to Maverick for fuel for Shane's machine, and some fuel for us! We got on the freeway and headed to Pocatello, and then down to highway 30, and then onto Soda Springs. In Soda Springs we stopped for a quick bathroom break, and a snack at the A&W Root beer stand.

Oh, you're probably wondering where Bill and Jacob are by now. Jacob was delayed at work, so they were behind us about an hour. They sent a message that they were in Pocatello and on the way!

After our snack, we continued north on Highway 34, and then took the cutoff to Diamond Creek. We arrived at our camping spot at 4:01 in the afternoon after traveling 172 miles. Our camping spot was a nice, secluded spot on Mill Springs road next to a creek.

We set up camp, and I discovered my new tent and cot combination were not to my liking, so I packed up the tent, got out my spare that I had brought, and set it up instead. We were enjoying camp when Bill and Jacob arrived. After they had set up their tents, we broke out the tools and disassembled the seats on Shane's machine and installed the seat risers that had arrived in the mail that very morning. The job went fairly quickly, and then we all settled down to a fire, and a meal of Mountain House dinners and other items everyone brought. We sat around the fire and visited until it was time for bed.

Wednesday, August 9th

On Wednesday morning, Bill arrived somewhere around 9 and we loaded his machine in the back of my truck, hooked up the trailer, and put dad's RZR on the trailer, followed by Shane's new Maverick after we had



[Picture archive for Wednesday](#)

Thursday, August 10th

That night, after being a bit cold, decided in the morning to swap my sleeping bag for my other one that I had in the truck. It was a little bulkier, but still fit on the rack.

After everyone else had their machines packed back up after getting up, we locked the trucks, and off we went!

We rode north on Diamond Creek, which was a nice gravel road. After a few miles, we hit the Blackfoot River road and crossed Highway 34. After a quick jaunt down the highway (which in hindsight we found out we should have just crossed the road and the trail was on the other side) we jumped on to the trail, crossed a bridge that was built just for the loop, and took a group photo.



As we continued, we stopped at Tincup Creek and watched a bald eagle for a minute before continuing on. We drove past some houses, and a LDS church house where we took a break in the parking lot.

After our break, we continued on the wide gravel road until we came to our first forest road 31 miles into our adventure.

We headed up Willow Creek, which was a nice road for machines, but really not for vehicles. It was a little rutted out and a bit rocky. As we got to the top, there was a lookout point that allowed us to look out into the valley below.



After a break, we continued to the road junction at the top and turned onto Barnes Creek and headed down the mountain. It was full of trees just like Willow Creek, and we found a collapsed cabin that we checked out for a few minutes. When we got to the bottom of the road, we found a sign that indicated that they road may be closed to damage. It was rutted out pretty back in several spots so people have been going on it when they shouldn't.

At this point we connected to the Herman McCoy road, a main road that heads to Alpine Wyoming. We intended to make good time on the road and head straight to Alpine, until we got to the Baribou road junction and decided to go check out an old mine. We explored the old mine site for a bit and then headed back down.



On the way down, we came to a short ATV spur. I headed down and we are glad I did because we found a cabin in not that bad of shape along with some old mining equipment.



After our visit was done, we went down another dead end road that ended up being a bust so we continued to Alpine. On the 20 mile jaunt we saw lots of forested area and also the Palisades reservoir. We arrived in Alpine at 1:36 pm, a little past our goal. We filled up with gas, and then crossed the street for some late lunch. Most of us chose the brisket burger, and Shane opted for a 25 piece chicken wing lunch. Even though we all had a wing or two as well, he got a to-go box for his dinner later that night.



After lunch, we stopped at the hardware store to look around and get some snacks, and then we headed back out along the Greys River. The river was pretty nice, and about five miles later we crossed the river on a bridge and headed up a road that was going to connect to an ATV trail. We came across the sign that

was obviously old, but told us that a fire was in the area and that if we entered at our own risk. We quickly decided to keep going.

We connected to the Squaw Creek atv trail and we found it was an old road and had lots of wild flowers on it. The views were good and we enjoyed the trail!



At the bottom of the trail we saw some equipment and trucks but didn't see anyone doing any work so we continued since we were close to camp. We had planned on staying at the Murphy Creek Campground, but when we got there, no ATV's were allowed so we backtracked a mile and found a really nice sport on the river to camp at just before 5:00 pm.

We set up camp and most of us had a light dinner since we had lunch so late in the afternoon. With the river so close, we had a nice fire and enjoyed the evening after riding 95 miles with 5 hours of riding time and 3:45 of "stopped" time on the clock. We looked at some maps we picked up in town and found a new set of UTV trails that were not on the old map we had, so we figured that tomorrow we would check those out. That evening we went to bed around 9:30 and slept pretty good.



[Picture archive for Thursday](#)

Friday, August 11th

Friday morning arrived, and we were all pretty much out of bed by 7:00 am. After some breakfast, and packing up all our things, we hit the trail at exactly 8:00 a.m.! We drove down the road just a bit and found a nice place to have a group photo.



Only four miles down the road we found a huge land slide from a few years previous that blocked the road and dammed up the river. We looked around for a bit before continuing our voyage.

About fifteen miles from camp, we hit the junction we were looking for after looking at the airport on some private ground. We also saw the old ranger station as well. At the junction, we found a sign that indicated that the 64" trail was built with decal money from the state (Wyoming). We found that most of the UTV trail system we were riding was actually an old road system that was removed from the map with a couple sections that were built to connect them together.

The first section of the trail was very rocky, but after a while it smoothed out. We came to an area with a bunch of rock chucks and a huge rockslide. Had we been in Idaho, a few rock chucks may have been shot at!



As we approached the end of this trail, we nearly connected to the main road, instead, we headed back up another road and jumped onto another 64" trail. This trail was also really nice, and we had a lot of fun

riding it. At the end of this trail, we took a picture of Bill pointing at the sign.



After the photo, we continued up the road to the next ATV trail and had lunch at a nice little spot. Had we wanted to hike a mile or so, we could have had lunch at a lake. Needless to say, hiking was not on our agenda, so after lunch we rode back down a ways and jumped onto the next 64" trail.

This trail had some spectacular views, but what was most impressive was the work done on the trail. Anyplace water crossed the trail, they had gathered large amounts of rocks and built it up so it would not wash out!



We also ran across two HUGE trees that had been knocked over by the wind! As you can see from the following photo, it was a really large tree!



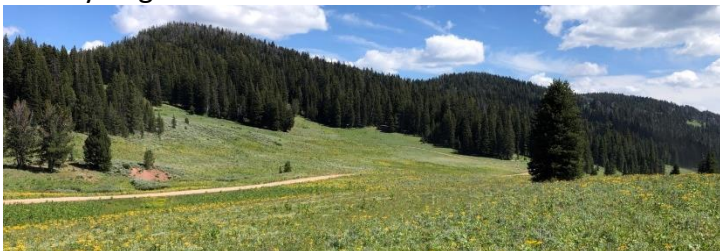
We connected back onto the main road after crossing a bridge and headed south to our next camping spot. Most of the rest of the ride for a while was just on the main road. It was in good shape for a while, but then was very narrow and rutted pretty bad. Oh, dust... Not much dust. It had rained a few days prior to our trip, so not much dust, but muddy roads in places.

We made a stop at the Cazier Guard Station and outhouse, but no one needed the facilities, so we continued on.

As we continued, we passed a motorhome and fifth wheel and wondered what kind of crazy people they were. A bit later, we came across a huge mud hole that motorcycles were trying to go through. We had no problems and continued on our way.

We came to the Tri Basin Divide which is the area where the Great Basin, Columbia River, and Colorado River junctions are all at. We then came to the Lander Cut-Off and then made a stop at the Lebarge Meadows Guard station for a break.

After our break, we headed to camp and found a really large area with flowers.



At 3:37 we pulled into our camp site just up the road from a permanent sheep camp. We had covered 87 miles with 5 hours of moving time and 2:30 of stopped time for the day.

We setup camp, with a snoring section and non-snoring section and kicked back and relaxed.



Although most of us ate MRE's or freeze dried meals, Shane broke out a steak he had been carrying in his cooler! He got a flat rock nice and hot and slapped it on and grilled it. He also got out his frying pan and cooked up some onions, sausage, and cheese and diced up part of the steak. It looked really good!



After supper, we sat around and visited once again, and most of us were in bed between 9 and 9:30.

[Picture archive for Friday](#)

Saturday, August 12th

Saturday morning came, and we did our regular morning routine, roll up the sleeping bags, sleeping pads, pack the tent, and put everything back in our machines. With the anticipation of fuel and breakfast in Afton Wyoming, we were on the road by 7:47 am.

Our quick jaunt took us down the forest road, past the snowmobile parking area, and after only five miles, we hit the highway. We traveled on the highway for about six miles, and then jumped off the highway and onto a bypass to avoid more highway. We went along a country road system through the tiny town of Fairview, and then into Afton.

We went to Maverick, which was inundated with bikers going home from Sturgis, and filled up our fuel tanks and topped off any spare fuel containers that were used. We asked a fellow enthusiast to take our photo and asked where to go get a good breakfast. His suggestion as noted, and off we went.



We found the Salt River Grill, placed our orders, and some made phone calls home. Breakfast arrived, and everyone enjoyed a nice meal!



After we were done eating, we went back to Maverick because we forgot to get some ice for the coolers, and we were back on the trail by 9:45. We headed back through Fairview, and onto a county road

headed back to the Idaho portion of the Caribou mountains.

On the way we were looking for an ATV trail to jump on, but it was blocked on private property, so we continued on our way.

We came to the Wells Canyon Road junction, and found that it had recently been re-routed and was a VERY nice road! We found out why shortly thereafter. We came to a phosphate mine, and marveled at how a mountain can be removed from the face of the earth! We looked at the signs for the Smoky Canyon Mine for a bit and continued on our way.

A little while later, we stopped and looked at the map. We were ahead of schedule, so we figured we would take a few side roads\trails. We jumped onto the Georgetown road, and headed to Hess Pass, an ATV trail. We found that one of the short bypass portions of the trail did not exist, so we turned back and reconnected with the road, and then on down to the Hess Park ATV trail.

We found this trail to be nice, but NOT one we would want to go the other way on! It had some steep sections, with all the soil washed out. The rocks were big, and there were a few areas with no passing opportunities at all. We also discovered that the trail had been re-routed a bit on the middle section sometime in the last year or so as well.



The above photo shows where the trail drops suddenly and is rocky and steep!

We also rode the Cold Spring trail, and Hawks Roost Road. We used this junction as a break area, and then continued on. We rode up Slug Creek, then up the Cold Spring ATV loop, and then on the Upper Spring/Upper Dry Valley atv trail.

This trail was interesting, it was through a grassy valley, and upon a little farther down the trail, we discovered it was actually a somewhat reclaimed mine site! We were riding on the old mine, and off to the side we could see the pit going along the mountain. We stopped in a few spots for some photos before continuing our journey.



At the bottom of the trail, we had to look around a bit to get our bearings, but quickly found the way to go. We rode through the desert for a while, before connecting with the railroad tracks, and then along the tracks for a while, and then on a really wide road. We found that this road led to another active mine site. We found large equipment parked for the weekend, but obviously working during the work week.



We found our road junction, and headed up Maybe Canyon which went through another active mining area as well as a reclaimed area. The road had been moved a bit, and we dropped into the other side, and then back up the next canyon.

At the Diamond Creek road junction, we looked around at a couple possible campsites, and ultimately found a nice large area just off the main road at 3:45 pm.

We followed our usual routine. Unload the machines, refuel them, setup tents and cots, unroll sleeping bags, drink cold pop from the cooler, and eat our regular meals of MRE's and freeze dried dinners. We sat around the camp fire

That night we relaxed from our 97 mile trip which took us 4:45 of moving time and 3:17 looking around, fueling up, or having breakfast.

We all slept well that night after going to bed somewhere around 9:30 pm.

[Picture archive for Saturday](#)

Sunday, August 13th

On Sunday morning we awoke, packed, and enjoyed some breakfast before heading out at 8:10. We went up the road just out of camp, and connected the Bear Canyon ATV trail. We didn't make it very far before we had to break out the chain saw and remove a tree from the trail. After finishing what someone started with a hatched, we were on our way again.

Although we found this trail system we rode that consisted of Bear Canyon, Webster Ridge, and Coyote Creek, we would NOT want to ride it again and have to meet someone head on. This trail system was very narrow most of the way, had a few steep spots, and would have required one group to back up for a nearly a mile or more in several spots!



Having said that, we made our way to the top of Webster Ridge to the end of the trail. Unfortunately, there wasn't any view of anything special, just a hiking trail junction

As we went down Coyote Creek, we also found that the Forest Service and IDPR had rerouted the trail in a large section, as well as built several new bridges and had completed the work only a week or so prior to our riding on the trail! Good job guys, but some passing areas would have been nice!



We connected with the Diamond Creek road once again, and back tracked a bit to find an outhouse for one party member, and then made the five mile ride

to our staging location. Once there, we took a bit to explore an ATV trail right out of camp. We found that it didn't match the trail on the map, had some steep spots, and some rocky spots, and some rutted spots, but we had a good time anyway!

We arrived back to the trucks just before noon. We loaded our machines in the vehicles, some of us changed clothes, and only about fifteen minutes later according to the GPS, we were headed home after riding only 30 miles that morning.

On the 173 mile drive home, we stopped in Soda Springs for lunch again, I filled up with diesel, and we caravanned home. I pulled into the driveway just before four o'clock.

Bill and Jacob continued on their way to Twin falls, along with Ted.

We unloaded the trailer, unhooked, and then unloaded the Grizzly out of the bed of the truck, and Shane headed home.

Including a few little running around trips at camp, I had covered 313 miles on our trip according to the GPS log and 327.8 according to the odometer.

Shane had his brand new Maverick well broken in and a little past the 200 mile maintenance period, and ready for oil and gear oil changes. No one had broken down, no one had any accidents, and we all had a ton of left over food.

The six of us had a great time, and we are planning on returning next year. We will probably run the route backwards and do some more exploring in the Fossil Canyon area.

[Picture archive for Sunday](#)

