

TCT MAGAZINE



WINTER 2016 • VOLUME 9 • ISSUE 1

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exploring Big
Bend, Texas

photo by Phillip
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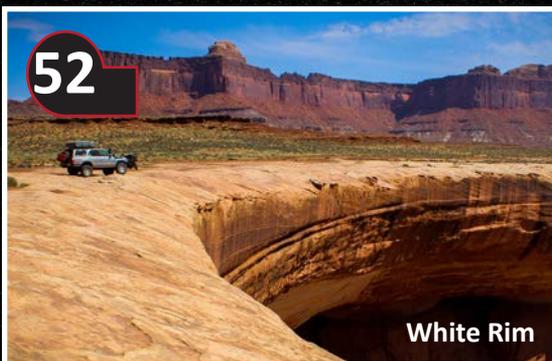
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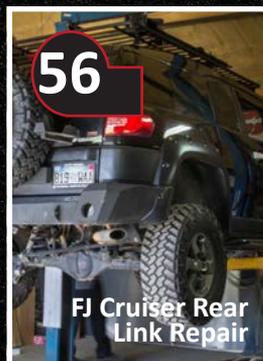
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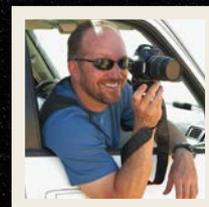
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

As we enter our 9th year of publication, the team at the top Toyota Magazine on the planet (probably the universe), is evolving and changing to better meet your needs.

We've done a little bit of house cleaning and re-organizing to start 2016, most of which will be transparent to our readers. All the changes we've made will enable our team to better cover everything happening in the Toyota Overland and Adventure world, so accept our apologies for this issue arriving later than you may have expected.

When Angie & I began publishign FJC Magazine in 2008, we decided on 4 quarterly issues per year. In 2014 we added a 5th issue as a Year in Review, mainly so we could publish SEMA news as early as possible.

Starting this year, we're moving back to four issues but we've shifted our publication times to provide the same level of coverage as last year. Going forward our Winter issue will publish in February, Spring in May (after Overland Expo), Summer in August (after FJ Summit), and Fall in November (after SEMA show). Our team feels this is the best use of our resources and will result in more timely coverage of everything in our little Toyota world.

Of course you can always find breaking news on our website at <http://tctmag.me> as well as our social networks Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram. Our YouTube channel will also include up date videos covering a variety of Toyota, overland, and adventure topics.

Thanks for sticking with us all these years, and we look forward to serving you well into the future!

Until next time, stay safe, Tread Lightly, and HAVE FUN!

Shane



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Big Bend, Texas

a Thanksgiving Adventure

Story and Photos by Phillip Jones

East of El Paso, the *Rio Grande* carves a scenic path south of the Solitario Flatiron Mountains, through Santa Elena Canyon, and at the base of the Sierra Del Carmen as it turns northward. On the U.S. side of the river, the diverse geological structures spanning the Big Bend Ranch State Park (BBRSP) and Big Bend National Park (BBNP) prevent uniformity, keeping things interesting for the traveler. Across the brown river, Mexico stands tall and beautiful, providing an alluring backdrop of seemingly unobtainable mountains.

For the adventurers seeking unpaved roads and 4x4 trails, these two parks, as well as surrounding territories, do not disappoint. Nestled between the two parks, the eccentric Texan communities of Terlingua and Lajitas offer unique dining experiences and night life. As with any locale off the beaten path, never assume a constant. Yes, each town has a gas station. That does not mean fuel is always available. Bring extra fuel canisters.

One can never get enough of the Big Bend region. Rare birds, frequent coyote sightings, and colorful sunsets illuminating the mountains redefines the meaning of being one with nature. Find the right spot and camping becomes a treat as the sun goes down and the stars bring the night to life.

An annual gathering of off-roaders and rock hunters usually occurs over the Christmas and New Year's timeframe. For the Yota crowd, the event is organized in the Texas section of FJCruiserForums.com. Camp is based in the hilly Rancho Topanga Campground west of Terlingua. In 2015, an additional gathering took place over Thanksgiving week and I jumped at the opportunity.

Rio Grande snakes through the mountains of Mexico and Big Bend Ranch State Park.



Terlingua night life showcases local talent.



Stunning views from Rancho Topanga Campground.





Barn find? One of several automotive relics at Rancho Topanga.



A passport and a \$5 boat ride gets you across the border into Mexico.



This restaurant in Mexico features tables on a balcony overlooking Boquillas Canyon and the U.S.

The day before Thanksgiving, with passports in hand, we set out to cross the border into Mexico. The village of Boquillas del Carmen sits atop a hill above the Rio Grande. For years, tourists were able to park their vehicles in BBNP and cross the river via a small ferry to enjoy a cerveza or a pure cane sugar soft drink in Mexico. After 9/11, the border closed and the small village suffered financially.

The U.S. built a border patrol station and port of entry in BBNP at the exact spot, re-opening the border in April 2013. Despite the added bureaucracy, and the passport requirement, it is still worth the effort to take the excursion and enjoy some Mexican hospitality while taking in the scenery of Boquillas Canyon. We climbed into the ferry and crossed the river. Upon arrival, we paid the famous

Singing Mexican, Victor, our \$5 for the ferry ride and another chunk of cash for the donkey transport up the hill. I wasn't keen on riding a mule, so I upgraded to a horse for an additional \$5.

Dining, drinks, and shopping are typically all that occurs. Our group, made up mostly of rock hunters, went the extra mile ... literally. We

hired a local guide to take us to the Cave of Crystals. What that meant was we climbed into his pickup truck (some of us sat in the bed) and endured a trip to the trail head via 4x4 roads in a decades-old 2WD truck. We hiked up and down the hills for almost two miles toward Boquillas Canyon. Although the cave is near the river, it faces south and is thus hidden from one of the popular trails on the U.S. side. This neat little cave is completely made of crystals: floor, roof, and walls. Well worth the hike.

For Thanksgiving Day, we ventured up the 4.5-mile Christmas Mountains trail. These mountains are just north of BBNP on land owned by the University of Texas. While camping is not permitted, visitors can obtain a day use permit. Our guide, David Aurzada, led us with his yellow FJ Cruiser. The rough road kept us under 5 mph on average, or maybe it was the astounding scenery that slowed us. The route winds through valleys, across the sides of mountains, at the edges of steep cliffs, and eventually terminates at a high overlook at an elevation



The Cave of Crystals in Mexico is covered in these beautiful formations.





Taking a break on the way up the Christmas Mountains trail.



Looking down on Big Bend National Park from atop Christmas Mountains.

of 5,400 ft, which is quite high for Texas. We spent nearly an hour taking in the fabulous views of the mountains below.

The return trip was on the same trail, yet it felt completely different as the weather changed, the clouds cleared, and more mountainous scenery was revealed. Upon arrival at David's cabin, we feasted on traditional Thanksgiving fare while discussing other trails we plan to conquer in the future.

While many people were venturing to their favorite retailers for Black Friday, we chose to hit the famed Black Gap trail in BBNP (cover photo). High clearance and 4WD is certainly a must for various sections. Tanya Cole guided us in her red FJ Cruiser on the 38-mile route. We visited the fascinating Marsical Mine remains. After we exited the unpaved roads, we drove up to the Chisos Basin where clouds greeted us as fog dancing around the peaks.

For our final day of off-roading, we first hit the Las Burras Loop 4x4 trail in BBRSP, which is only one of many 4x4 roads in this park. The tip of the loop stops near high caves.

After lunch in at the famed Lajitas Resort, we headed to the county roads north of Terlingua: a network of unpaved roads winding through medium sized canyons and smaller mountains. We did a 26-mile run that became a bit more challenging as darkness took over. As I led us back to civilization, my 7-inch Zero Dark LED lights lit up a black cat that was too big to be a house cat, but the head wasn't quite big enough for a panther. What the heck did I see? Possibly a Jaguarundi. Google it. 🐾





High caves in Big Bend Ranch State Park on the Las Burras 4x4 trail.

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BAJA 1000

Year 2

By Daniel Markofsky

Going to Baja is a bucket list—going twice, pure awesomeness.

Going to the Baja 1000 checks an item off the bucket list. Going twice, pure awesomeness. Might need a bigger bucket. This is a problem worth having and here's how it went.

Act I: Las Vegas

I had to get from Denver to Las Vegas to catch my ride to Ensenada. I found a \$19 fare. Actually, the fare was \$0.85 and the rest was taxes. I'm sure the government will do a better job with my money than I would.

Next I had to find a place to stay overnight in Vegas. So now I have a confession, I'd never stayed in Las Vegas. I made it all these years only driving through twice never really stopping. After one night in Las Vegas I now understand. Las Vegas is like nothing else.

I put word on the social network "looking for a place in Las Vegas" and fellow adventurer Brian Dorr not only was able to secure lodging that wasn't in the back of his truck (although



Leaving Las Vegas. L-R Bryon Dorr, D. Markofsky, Woody, and Heather.

if you've ever seen the back of his truck it's a sweet set up), but he did a bit of off-road driving and had me running over cobblestones to jump into the almost still moving truck at the airport. Smoothest pick up ever—and we were off.

I'll leave the night in Las Vegas that up to your imagination because what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. I can assure you it was less exciting than what you might imagine.

Now why did I fly to Vegas to go to Baja? That leaves about 1000 miles to go.

Act II: Road Trip

No one has turned social media into a more effective tool for Toyota 4x4 goodness than Brian "Woody" Swearington. Since you drive a Toyota you know www.IH8MUD.com and your family has IH8MUD to thank for hundreds of hours you lost to that blue screen making you happy, answering questions, and starting "how should I modify my truck" threads. When I heard that I had the chance to spend a day in the truck with Woody, Heather, and Otis, I jumped at it. There is no better way to travel to the Baja 1000 than in the well-built IH8MUD 80 series freshly equipped with Autocraft progressive coils with Autocraft-spec Icon reservoir shocks and Autocraft rear seat bar. More about those later.

The drive from Vegas to Ensenada was a breeze interrupted only by delicious Mexican food off a random exit in California. We rolled down the coast into Ensenada and celebrated Otis' first international adventure.

Act III: Contingency

The Baja 1000 is every bit as exciting in person as you might imagine. Unquestionably the Canguro Racing team is the finest group to travel with. The puzzled looks on the faces of all of the Mexicans trying to understand why a race team is named after a kangaroo makes it worthwhile. Before all of that, we went out for a big steak dinner followed up by the ever reliable Thrifty ice cream.

Baja experiences are everywhere and going to the race is much more than the amazing race trucks. It would be easy to spend hours pouring over any one race vehicle and learning about all the amazing components modifications and experiences of that vehicle and the team. Now imagine surrounded by hundreds of these vehicles, thousands of these people, and cramming it all into 24 to 36 hours of dusty racing over 800 miles and it is simply in all respects absolutely overwhelming to the senses.

There's no better way to travel to the Baja 1000 than in the well-built IH8MUD 80 series.



Juan Carlos with his RAV4 Chaser.



Jeff Breier's FJ Chase Rig on the podium



Brian, Kurt, Marc & Will

So now I know that a fully loaded expedition setup 80 Series Land Cruiser can smoothly power slide on BFG AT KO2's.

Contingency morning dawns crisp and clear and by sun up dozens of rigs were lined up. Contingency is a holiday in Ensenada and everybody was out to see the trucks, motorcycles, quads, and side-by-sides and the teams.

Canguro racing was already hard at work with last-minute vehicle prep and getting drivers registered.

Act IV: Tacos

The tacos in Baja are so good that they deserve their own act. Mmmmm. I stay away from the brown water guacamole served out of old five gallon hydraulic oil buckets, but some say that's just a personal preference.

Final Act: The Baja Mil—The Race

Race day dawned and good time destiny determined again that I pile in with Woody, Heather, and Otis. We headed off to "observe and monitor communications." Adrenalin must have been pumping as Woody went to pass a semi on an outside curve overlooking a bluff, which would have been fine for Mexico driving but for the tightening turn. So now I know that a fully loaded expedition setup 80 Series Land Cruiser can smoothly power slide on BFG AT KO2's. All part of the adventure.

For our next difficult task it was essential that we stop for more tacos and then drive directly to a beach, park atop of a 12-foot bluff and carefully watch four hours of racing waiting to





Pure Racing Madness

catch a glimpse of Monica pass in the dark. We were treated to campfire where one complete example of a native plant provided for an entire fuel.

The best views of the Toyota Mexico trophy truck came as she flew through this section. The flapping caution tape on the front bumper must've been picked up from taking a corner a little too tight somewhere. Somewhere along the course she broke a frame and a shock piston as thick as your wrist.

While we waited the sunset over the pacific and we caught a glimpse of dolphins offshore.

We cheered in the dark as Monica blew past and then piled in to meet at the next pit stop. On the way we were treated to an encounter with race legend Rod Hall. Although he proved to best to our finish this year, there's no denying with his skill and experience he earned every bit of it.



Toyota de Mexico racing

I'd like to say that NASCAR would be proud of our pit stops. My job was to check tire pressure. Three were good and one was a 10 PSI high and the whole team was waiting on that one tire when it was time to leave the pit. In other words, the entire pit lasted long enough for one guy to check four

tires and let 10 pounds of air out. You do the math.

However, that must've been just enough time for Baja 1000 gremlins to jump in the truck, because after this they started to work their troublesome magic.



Waiting at Coco's Corner

The constant stopping to reset the throttle body was causing major delays.

Somewhere around race mile 420, one of the most remote sections of the entire course, she ran out of gas. It took nearly four hours for the chase truck just to get in with additional fuel. However even after that the truck kept losing power and needing a restart.

Well behind and almost eight hours later Monica rolled in to Coco's corner. I could think of a lot of worse places to hang out with some good friends for eight hours but the whole time we were thinking about the race track and wishing there was something we could do.

The road in and out of Coco's was also the race course and Woody, himself a bit of a Baja racer, put the new Autocraft suspension to task soaking up the bumps, drifting through corners and hammering down the straightaways. This road won't be the same next time as we passed countless actions under construction. The highway won't go straight to Coco's but it will never be the remote traveler rest stop like it has been.

Monica handled the next stretch of highway like a champ but trouble started as soon as she was back onto the dirt. The constant stopping to reset the throttle body was causing major delays. As a team regrouped at mile marker 660 there were constant efforts to stay in touch with the race car and come up with a solution. Our chase vehicle went ahead to Checkpoint 6 to find out its status and how much time we had to reach it.

There are countless ways to be knocked out of competition in the Baja 1000. Mechanical, navigational, booby traps from creative spectators, exhaustion, and failing to make checkpoints on time. We arrived at Checkpoint 6 as the crew was packing up, ready to close. Monica was still two hours out, at least. Her race was over. We turned around back to radio range to pass the news. Then pulled off into the desert for a rest and cup of coffee. After an hour or so we headed back to Ensenada.

The next morning as most of the team headed home, I stuck around for a day and went surfing. After all, it's Baja. 🇲🇽

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4 Runner

1996 to early '99 4Runner

CBI Front Hybrid Bumper Installation

Beau Johnston

Difficulty: 3 out of 5

This project requires cutting and welding of the frame and should only be tackled by someone with previous welding experience. Those tackling this project should wear proper personal protective equipment to help prevent injury. Do not attempt this project without a helper, or two, to prevent straining one's back by trying to hold a bumper in place while bolting it up.

Tools Required:

- Ratchet and Socket Set (Metric & SAE)
- Combination Wrench Set (Metric & SAE)
- Torque Wrench
- Soldering Iron
- Grinder with Cutoff Wheel
- Welder

Step 1: Factory Bumper Removal

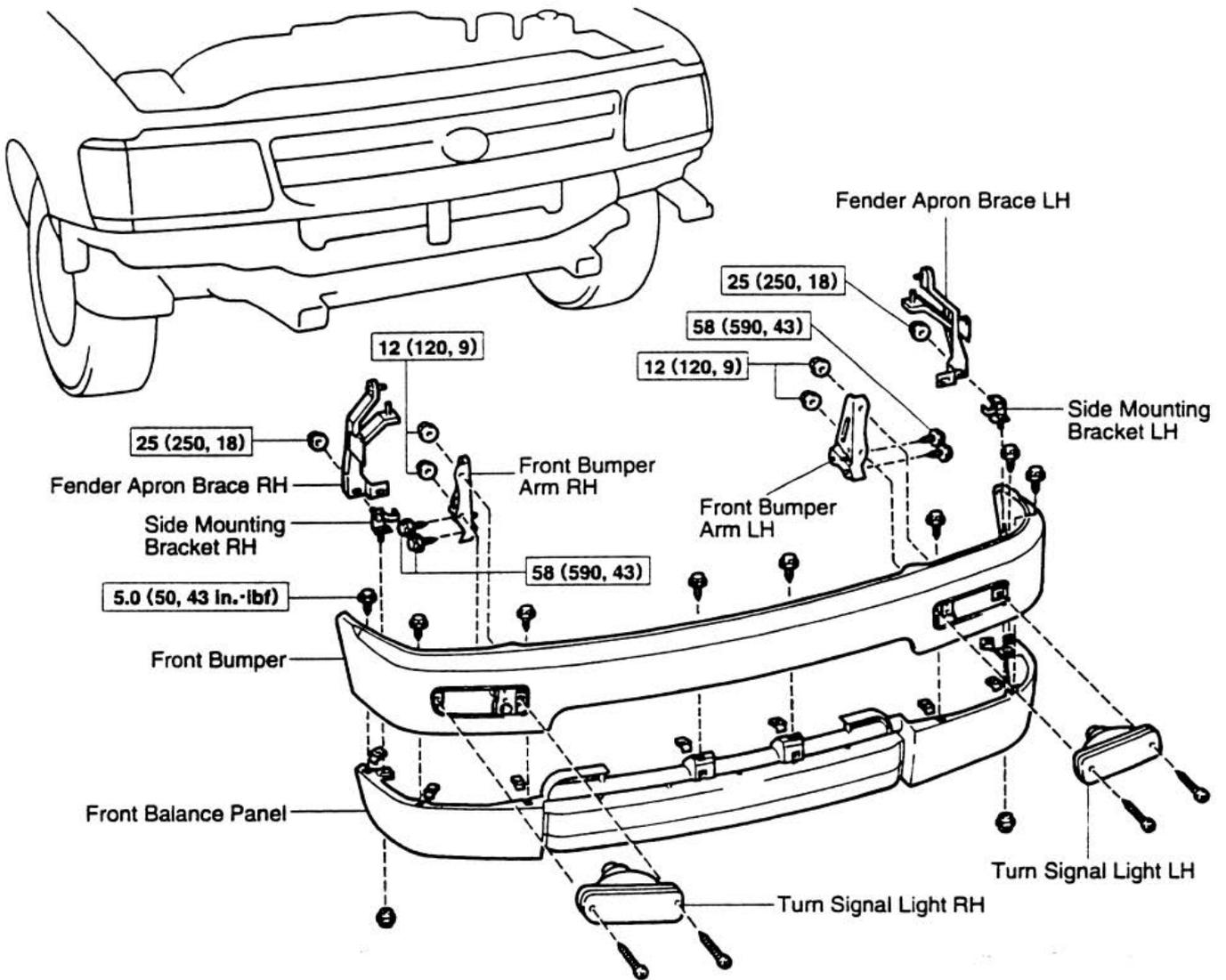
Locate and unplug the wiring harnesses from the turn signals.

Locate and unbolt the two Fender Apron Braces, there is one brace on each side. A single nut is used to connect the brace to the side mounting bracket.

Locate and unbolt the two Front Bumper Arms from the frame. There is one bumper arm on each rail. Note: Do not discard the hex-head cap screws as they will be used to install the new bumper.

With the bumper removed, locate and unbolt the two Fender Apron Braces from the inner fenders.





N·m (kgf·cm, ft·lbf): Specified torque



Step 2: Modifying the Frame

Before the new CBI Front Hybrid Bumper can be installed, the frames of 1996 through early 1999 4Runners need to be modified. These years of 4Runners had a different plate on the front of each frame rail than the late 1999 through 2002 models. *If you are reading this installation and own a late '99 through 2002 4Runner you can skip this and jump Step 3. The frame end plates need to be replaced with the new plates supplied by CBI. This is done by grinding off the welds securing the factory end plates to the frame.

Now, with the factory plates removed, temporarily bolt the new mounting plates to the CBI Hybrid Bumper. With the help of a friend, lift the bumper into place and use the Front Bumper Arm bolts to temporarily secure it in place. The new mounting plates need to be flush with the frame rails and tacked into place. Note: My 4Runner was in an accident prior to us purchasing it. This resulted in the passenger-side frame rail needing to be trimmed an extra 1/4 inch to get everything to line up properly.

With the new mounting plates tacked into place, the bumper can be unbolted and removed. The new mounting plates can now be welded into place. Once complete, the frame and mounting plates should be painted with a liberal coat of paint to prevent rust from developing.



Step 3: Bolting Everything Up

The new Hybrid Bumper can be bolted up once the paint has dried. Now is a great time to install a winch, if you are choosing to install one. CBI recommends that you torque the six main mounting bolts to 70 ft-lbf to ensure a solid connection to the vehicle.



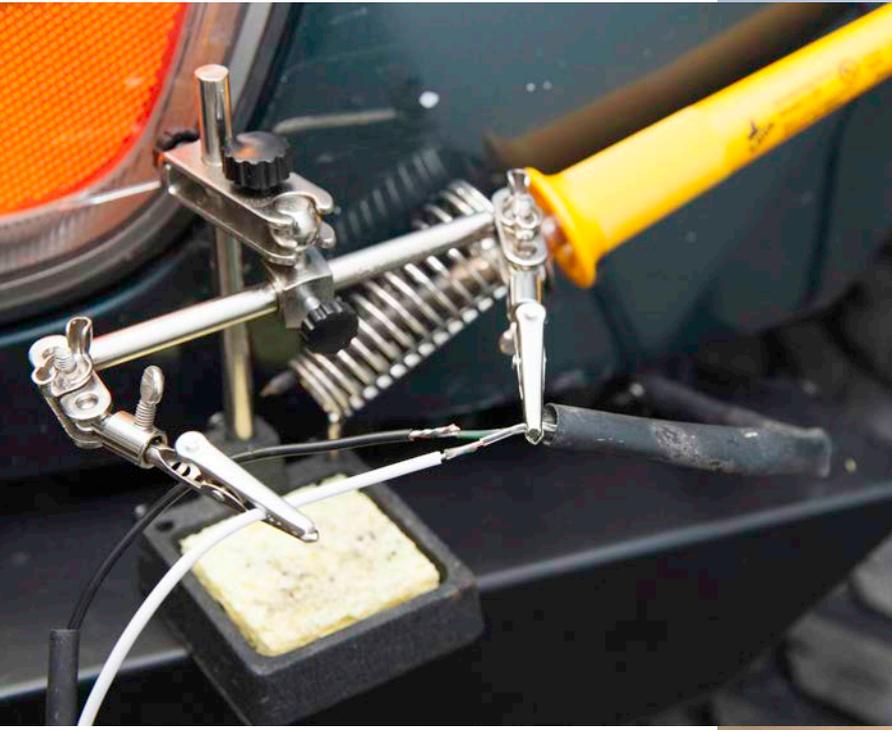
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With the bumper mounted, the new turn signals can be installed and wired up. The factory plugs will need to be cut off of the wiring harness and soldered to the new light pigtails. Be sure to cover the wires with heat-shrink tubing to prevent corrosion.



Conclusion

Even with the extra bit of cutting and fitting required by my 4Runner's bent frame the installation went very quickly. I had the help of two friends during the project. One helped me lift the bumper into place as the second bolted everything up. This worked out rather well as the bumper needed to come on and off a few times to get the fitment just right. In all I am very impressed with the bumper's construction and I cannot wait to hit the trails to test its durability! 🇺🇸



Wavian Jerry Can

Story and Photos by Phillip Jones



While attending SEMA 2015, I stumbled across the Wavian booth and was immediately captivated by this product. I've heard the stories of people discovering rust inside their fuel can, or dust finding a way into the fuel. With a can cut open, the Wavian representative explained how the inside lining with fuel resistant Rezol enamel not only prevents rust, but if the can gets dented, the internal lining doesn't crack.

To Open the Can

1. Pull the locking pin clear of the bayonet clip. It should not pull out completely.
2. Flip the lever upwards. As the arms come clear of the bars, you will be able to raise the lid.
3. Now that as the lid is fully opened, the hinge slides down. This prevents it closing while in use.

To Close the Can

1. Lift the lid upwards using the lever and pull forward to align the seal with the mouth of the can.
2. Push the lever back until the arms of the lid have slid through the side bars of the can neck.
3. To secure, push the locking pin through to the other side and twist.



Wavian NATO Jerry Can

- Features include:
 - 1.5L Capacity
 - 2.5cm 20mm hose connection
 - 100% Recycled Steel
 - Full resistant enamel can
 - Safety locking arm
 - 100% Resistant to rust
 - 100% Resistant to fire
 - 100% Resistant to impact
 - 100% Resistant to UV
 - 100% Resistant to acid
 - 100% Resistant to alkali
 - 100% Resistant to salt
 - 100% Resistant to oil
 - 100% Resistant to petrol
 - 100% Resistant to diesel
 - 100% Resistant to kerosene
 - 100% Resistant to paraffin
 - 100% Resistant to aviation fuel
 - 100% Resistant to jet fuel
 - 100% Resistant to turbine engine oil
 - 100% Resistant to hydraulic oil
 - 100% Resistant to brake fluid
 - 100% Resistant to antifreeze
 - 100% Resistant to coolant
 - 100% Resistant to windshield washer fluid
 - 100% Resistant to car wash soap
 - 100% Resistant to household cleaning products
 - 100% Resistant to all other liquids

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Another brilliant feature is the leak-proof bayonet closure, complete with locking pin and strengthened hinge on the cap to prevent accidental bending when closing. Furthermore, the cap is designed to hold open when pouring fuel. Pop open the cap, look inside and notice an internal breather pipe for splash-proof pouring. When the cap is closed, a thick rubber gasket provides a seal of protection when clamped down.

Mounted in my rear bumper fuel carrier, I took this can on three off-road adventures for approximately 300 dusty miles. I opened the can after the last adventure and noticed there was no dirt inside the spout.



The included safety spout attaches in a similar fashion to the can via the clamping mechanism. Since most unleaded fuel vehicles have a smaller opening, Wavian includes an adapter. I found this adapter to be beneficial in that it put more space between the vehicle and the can, thus providing more room to rotate the can while pouring fuel to get that last drop. This platform is truly spill-proof. For added convenience, Wavian placed usage instructions on the can.



The bayonet closure clamps down and is then secured with a locking pin.



The safety spout clamps to the can, while the bayonet cap locks into place so it doesn't hit the spout.

The safety spout and adapter must be transported separately from the can. This may seem like an inconvenience, but it is minimal compared to the advantage of not having to smell like gasoline due to a leak from a lower quality spout, or having to replace spark plugs because dirt affected the fuel.

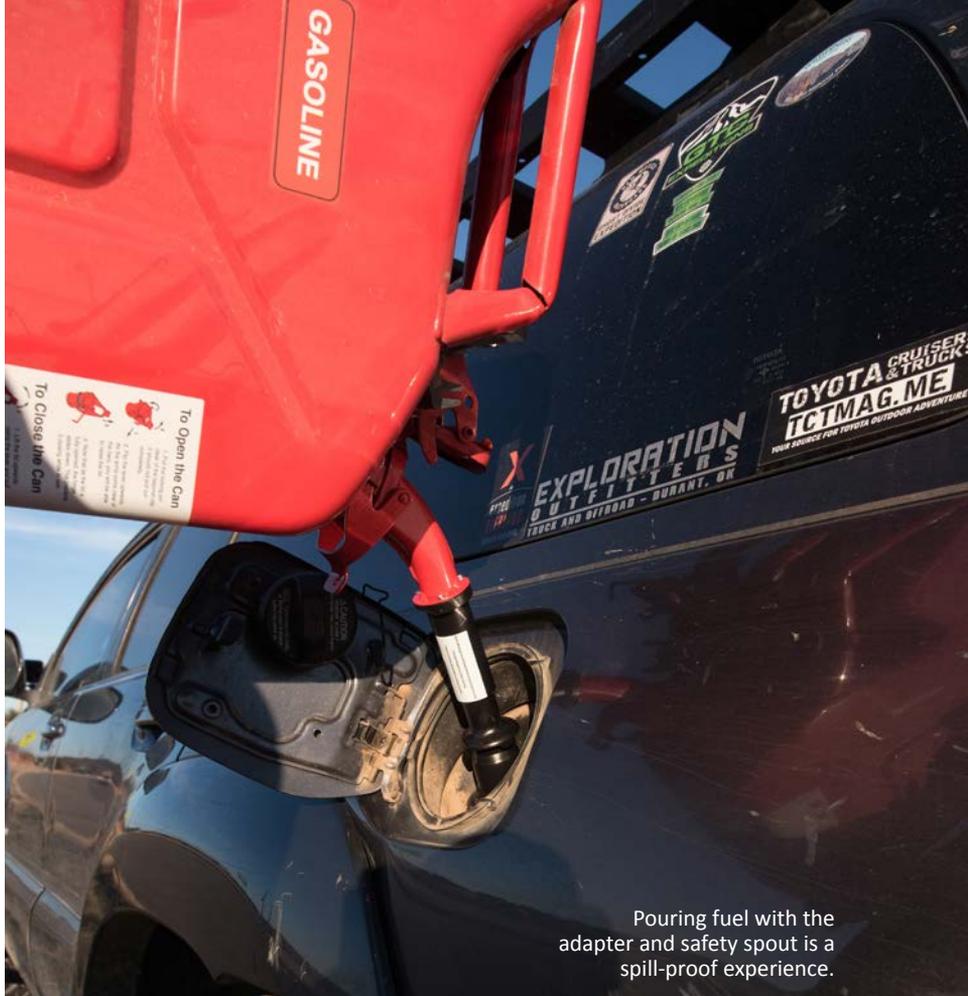
The safety spout with adapter for smaller fuel holes.



Facts regarding Wavian and the product:

- Wavian has been manufacturing these cans for various NATO militaries for over 80 years
- Original Mil Spec. EPA, CARB and DOT approved
- Complies with: Australian Standard AS 2906, German Standard-TUV/GS, Swedish Standard-SP
- Manufactured from 0.9mm cold rolled steel.
- Dual pan construction.
- Unique wide channel breather for better smoother pouring
- Seam welded for extra strength
- Three handle configuration
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You can purchase a Wavian Jerry can at www.swisslink.com.



Pouring fuel with the adapter and safety spout is a spill-proof experience.



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Free Membership!

Snowshoeing

The best way to beat those winter blues

By Beau Johnston

Images by Beau Johnston and Louise Holland



Let's face it, if you live in the northern regions of the United States, winters can seemingly go on forever. Snow tends to accumulate even before it is officially winter. By the time February rolls around you are suffering from the age-old "Cabin-Fever" and need to get out of the house. Luckily with snow comes the opportunity for great snowshoeing. Over the last few years Krista and I have jumped headlong into this Nordic sport and it has changed the way we view winter—it affords us the opportunity to explore a world transformed by snow.

Low-Cost Winter Sport

The great thing about the sport is it can be enjoyed without investing a lot of money in gear. Chances are you already own most of the winter gear you would need to start snowshoeing. Many community gear shops known for renting bicycles during the summer also rent snowshoes during the winter. If you choose to buy your own gear, shoes can be purchased online for as little as \$120 and a complete setup (snowshoes and poles) can be had for under \$200.

Where to Go

As the popularity of snowshoeing increases more and more communities are investing in the development of dedicated Nordic trail systems that cater directly to snowshoers. Many of these trails piggyback on the multitude of groomed trail systems already



used by cross country and Nordic skiers. Several communities have begun installing warming huts as destinations for winter explorers to warm up next to a wood-burning stove. I recently visited one such warming hut on a snowshoeing trip near Oregon's Mt. Bachelor. The hut was fully stocked with fire wood and I had a great conversation with some of the locals who were out enjoying the fresh powder the area had just received.

While groomed trails are a popular choice for many, there are other options for the more adventuresome. Many of the US Forest Service cabins and yurts available for rent during the summer months can also be rented during the winter season. Often headed by propane or wood stoves, these cabins can range in size from small to large and provide a great base for those in search of a great weekend adventure. My favorite snowshoeing trips was the time Krista and I celebrated New Years by snowshoeing into one of these cabins and spending the weekend exploring the area.

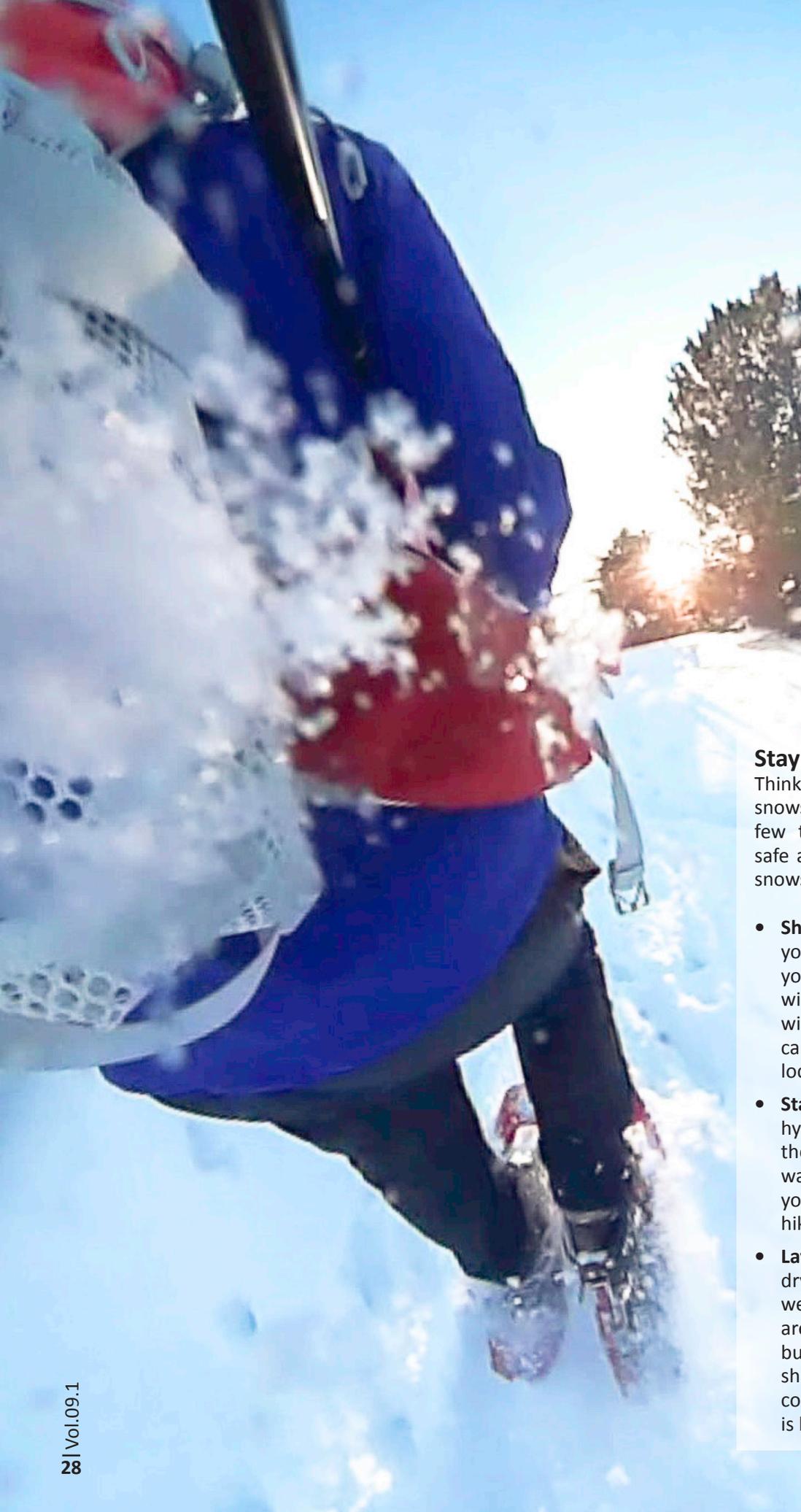


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Stay Safe!

Thinking about setting out on a snowshoeing adventure? Here are a few things to remember to keep you safe as you explore the back country on snowshoes.

- **Share Your Travel Plans:** Make sure you let at least one person know where you will be exploring and when you will be returning. If you fail to check in with them at the end of the day they can alert authorities to your general location.
- **Stay Hydrated:** It is important to stay hydrated while exercising, even during the winter months. Vacuum insulated water bottles are a great way to keep your water from freezing during your hike.
- **Layer Up:** The key to staying warm and dry in variable weather conditions is wearing multiple layers. Base layers are great for when the sun is out but the trail may track through the shadows. Dressing for the anticipated conditions, and packing an extra layer, is key.



- **Be Prepared:** A leisurely trip into the back country can turn deadly so it is important to go prepared. Avalanche beacons and rescue tools are cheap insurance if you and your friends decide to venture into areas prone to avalanches. At a minimum you should always carry a first aid kit, map of the area, and a compass or GPS. 📍



Southern Utah—In June?

An Overlanding Trip through the Wilds of Utah

Michael Holland, Park City Utah



Overlanding through Utah's backcountry should be on everyone's bucket list. Utah's overlanding routes enable the traveler to experience the land like no other. Not only does eye candy—spires, towers, canyons, mesas, etc.—surround the traveler, but the many dirt roads lead to some of the best adventures in North America. One can canyoneer down a slot, mountain bike an epic singletrack, or hike in a desert oasis stream. It's all available in Utah. My friends, Dave, Barb, and Sam, joined me on this 12-day overland adventure into the wilds of southern Utah.

* * *

We hiked to a thought-provoking petroglyph panel, dodged thunderstorms and flash floods, rappelled numerous times through a slot canyon, and found solitude right off a major thoroughfare, I-70 running east and west. The deserts of Utah in June? Yep, you read correctly; June can be a prime time to venture. For the past few years, I have escaped to "canyon county" in June immediately after the school year ends while my wife and daughter visit grandma in



Florida. I call a few friends, watch the weather forecast, and plan an adventure.

My eyes spot the exit sign, and we quickly separate from the traffic of the busy interstate to enter a more quiet, peaceful place—the Last Chance Desert. The wildflowers are blooming and the dirt road ahead is empty. Dave and I decrease the air pressure in our tires. South it is ... my Land Crusier and I lead the way. In a moment's notice the road surface transitions from soft sand to slippery clay. We turn onto a road leading to Cathedral Valley in Capitol Reef National Park. We get lucky, a day earlier we probably wouldn't have been able to access this area. The dried clay ruts in the road and the watermarks in the sand signal that this land was bombarded with rain. I pull over at the Muddy Creek Crossing to scout what lie ahead.



“Barb, you’re first!”

“What, I’m not crossing that ... why me?”

“Well, you don’t have a winch on your vehicle. You need to go first so Dave and I can winch you out if you get stuck.” Barb looked at me suspiciously, but she begins to edge her Tacoma into the water. Pretty anti-climatically she crosses with ease, and Dave and I quickly follow.



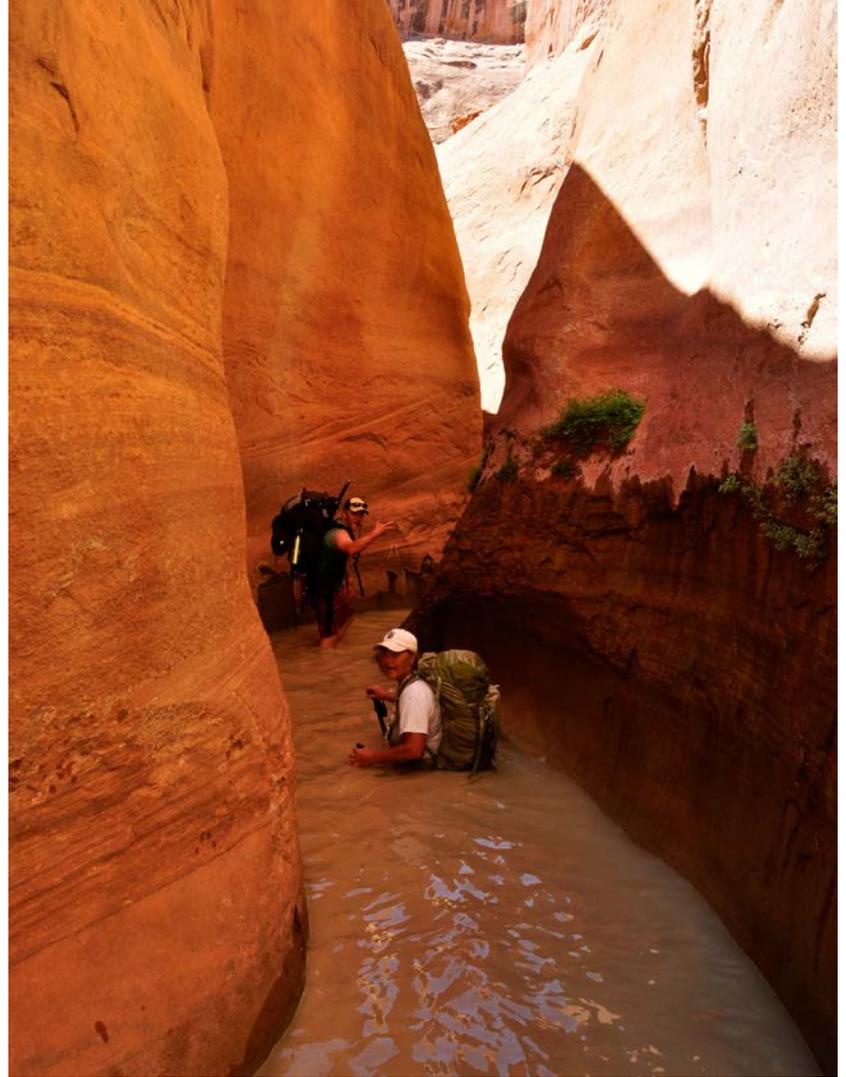
We pull our vehicles into a sweet spot off the road and pitch camp. Dave makes an incredible, tasty organic concoction for dinner. We dine on the goulash and warm ourselves around the fire. I check my cell phone; funny, no signal and no chance of finding one. We are out here! The sun sets behind the Thousand Lake Mountains, and I stare upon the starry sky. The cot calls—good night.

“Mike, there seems to be a lot of water in the road. Do you think it will flash flood?”

“Ahhh ... Looks like it just did ... the clouds are dark in the distance. Let’s give it a go!”

Barb and I begin driving up Muley Twist Canyon in the backcountry of Capitol Reef National Park. Dave and his Land Rover departed yesterday for home, so it’s the two of us fording the puddles of a recent flash flood. Our eyes fixate on all the arches sunken, hidden into the canyon walls. We round a corner and I notice a muddy, four-inch stream coming at us. I quickly wave to warn Barb.





“Let’s get to higher ground. Follow me!”

“What?”

Luckily, I had explored in this canyon previously. I knew there was a high bench around the corner. Feeling safe and secure, we embark on a spectacular hike to the crest of the reef. Capitol Reef is a 100-mile long stretch of rock running north and south in Central Utah. Upon reaching the crest, we stare onto the green grasses along the Notom-Bullfrog Road. Yes, the desert in June is spectacular!

We drive the Burr Trail through the small, picturesque town of Boulder on our way to the Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument created by President Clinton in 1996. Barb and I walk into the visitor center and hear words that we do not want to hear, “Sorry, I think the county closed the road.”

“What?”

“The rain washed out the Hole in the Rock (HITR) road. You need stick to the pavement.”

“Well, that’s a problem.”

Few roads in the monument are paved and more importantly, our plan the next five days hinges on the HITR road being open. We decide to drive down the road and turn around once we get to the barricade.

What else to do? We find no barricade. Yippee! The road is definitely wet, but not slippery. After numerous stream crossings, long water holes, and a few slips and slides, we exit onto the Egypt Bench road. We find an awesome camp spot, and I trek up to a hilltop to call Sam. Sam, a teaching colleague, could only get away mid-trip, so he was on his way to meet us. After coordinates are exchanged, we stoke the campfire, make dinner, and bask in our piece of paradise.

The following day, we all make our way down the HITR. The HITR is a former trail created by Mormons settling in southeastern Utah and needing a way to cross the mighty Colorado River. Their odyssey started as a quest but turned into somewhat of a nightmare. They spent months in the desert before eventually founding and settling in Bluff, Utah. On this day, the skies are blue, the temperature perfect and we love the drive. We stop at Dance Hall Rock. The pioneers used this natural rock amphitheater for musical performances and dancing as they waited for the trail to be blasted down to the Colorado River.

We meet up with Sam and he is amped about his new 2015 TRD Tacoma. He and Barb discuss the differences between her 2014 and his 2015 model (the cup holders generate the most discussion).

Our route continues toward the many fingers/canyons of the Glen Canyon Recreation Area. Lake Powell (really a reservoir) gleams in the distance. We hastily throw things in our packs for a one-night backpack and descend the slickrock canyon. The weight in our packs takes a little getting used to, but soon enough we skip down the canyon with delight. The canyon walls rise higher and water flows from perennial springs; soon enough we're walking in an ankle deep stream. For us, it's a wonderful afternoon! The black ravens keep us company as we throw down our sleeping bags in an enormous alcove and savor the sounds of canyon country. Good day, good night!

After sunrise and breakfast, we hike through waist deep water, climb up and over waterfalls, and avoid poison ivy as we meander through a narrow canyon following a stream to our waiting cars on the mesa top. Hiking in canyon country offers a magnificent experience! After seven miles we return to our trucks, wash up, and relish in the solitude. Eventually, we mosey





back along the HTR toward a camp spot for the night. My Land Cruiser leads, but I don't know exactly where I'm going. With a little luck we discover an outstanding site behind an enormous sandstone butte. We aren't the first visitors! Pioneer and cowboy signatures etched on the rock date back to the 1800s. We spent the rest of the evening around a campfire, sipping a few beers and watching the lightning strikes far in the distance.

With the sun striking Navajo Mountain, we pull out of camp and head toward the final adventure in the area. The roads have mostly dried. We halt momentarily when we come to a washed out road with a stream running down the middle of it. What to do? I jump out and scout a possible route.

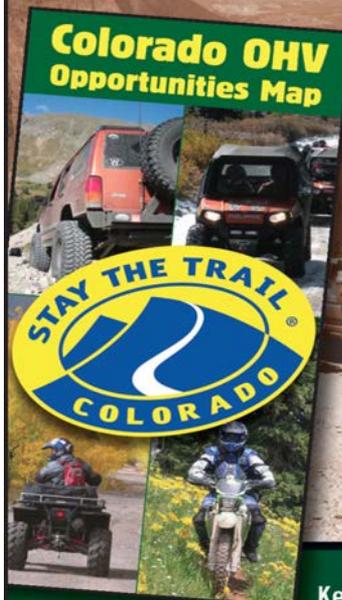
"Sam, what do you think? Barb, are you okay with going down the side and crossing the stream?"

"No! Abort!" Barb declared.

We disregard her dissension and jump in the trucks to make a go of it. Our trucks shift into 4-Low and I engage the Land Cruiser's rear locker. The crossing is easier than expected. Sam and I don our canyoneering gear once again. I inform Barb of our route; tired, she decides to hang back and relax. Sam rappels the first drop and feels stoked. All goes well until the third rap. We build an anchor quickly but once we descend, we find ourselves up to our knees in mud. We do our best to wallow through. After a few more raps and making another deadman anchor,



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we are almost free. Sam inches his way down the final rap and lands in a waist-deep water hole.

“Snake!” Sam yells as he crawls to the other side. Sitting on top of the rap, I begin to laugh. Sam notices air bubbling through the sand and decides the loch ness monster lives! He informs me that this waterhole reminds him of the trash compactor scene in “Star Wars” where the large snake takes down Luke. I tell him that no light sabers are needed, but that we need to rally. We saunter back to camp, and Barb laughs hysterically at us as we stumble into camp covered in mud from head to toe. After a shower (the Helton shower system rocks), we enjoy a dehydrated meal around the campfire recollecting about our trials and tribulations as Barb shakes her head and reveals she is glad she didn’t accompany us.

June in the deserts of Utah is grand. The weather can make things interesting and awe-inspiring. The lack of crowds makes finding solitude easy. So, if you see a white Land Cruiser bombing around there next June; know it’s me finding the goods. Join me! 🇺🇸



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FRAMED



Ernesto and Taisa (overlandtheamericas.com)—Taisa preps dinner on the back of their 4Runner (Sooty). The photo was taken around golden hour at the Iztaccihuatl Popocatepetl National Park in the state of Puebla, Mexico. That particular spot is called La Joya at 3,940 m / 12,940 ft. | Ernesto.

A group of Toyotas traveling along La Sal Pass near Moab. | Brad Billman

A group of Toyota off-road vehicles, including a silver Tacoma and a dark grey 4Runner, are parked on a rocky, dirt trail. The trail is surrounded by a dense forest of tall, thin trees with yellow and orange autumn foliage. In the background, a vast mountain range stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a scenic view of a mountain pass in a wooded area.

FRAMED

f/2.2 1/910s 5mm





FJ Cruisers descend the Christmas Mountains Trail in Texas, just north of the Big Bend region. | Phillip Jones

FRAMED



f/16 1/160s 50mm



Members of Lone Star Scenic Expeditions tour the scenic Oklahoma Honobia Creek trails.

FRAMED



f/10 1/320s 110mm



Trail Finder 2 RTR

RC4WD First Look

By Shane Williams

I've loved the 4x4 and off-road industry for as long as I can remember. After running this magazine for almost 10 years though, I've realized something. With little exceptions, none of us gets to explore as often as we'd like.

The desire to get on dirt, explore new places, and find adventure around every corner is not something that's easy to quench. Luckily, I've finally found an outlet that allows me to play ... with a toy ... and quench that thirst, for just a little while.

Late in 2016 I received my Trail Finder 2 ready to run kit from RC4WD, one of the top names in Radio Controlled 4x4 vehicles. While this truck is reminiscent of the original Toyota (Hilux) pickup, they also sell very nice FJ-40 Land Cruiser models, among others. This truck was basically ready to go out of the box. The remote was already set up and the truck came fully assembled. I added a LiPo battery that I use with my drone aircraft and was off and running (you can also use a NiCad if your prefer).



Ok, I'll admit that I don't generally spend much time "playing." Between a full-time job, my lovely family, and this awesome magazine—I stay pretty busy. Once I had this truck rolling though, I realized how relaxing RC wheeling can be.

I've always been interested in RC trucks, but frankly have never made the time to build one from scratch. RC4WD makes that part easy by delivering a ready to wheel truck. It literally took five minutes to unpack, another four to adapt my drone battery, and about two minutes to figure out the easy controls. I was wheeling in the snow in less than 15 minutes!



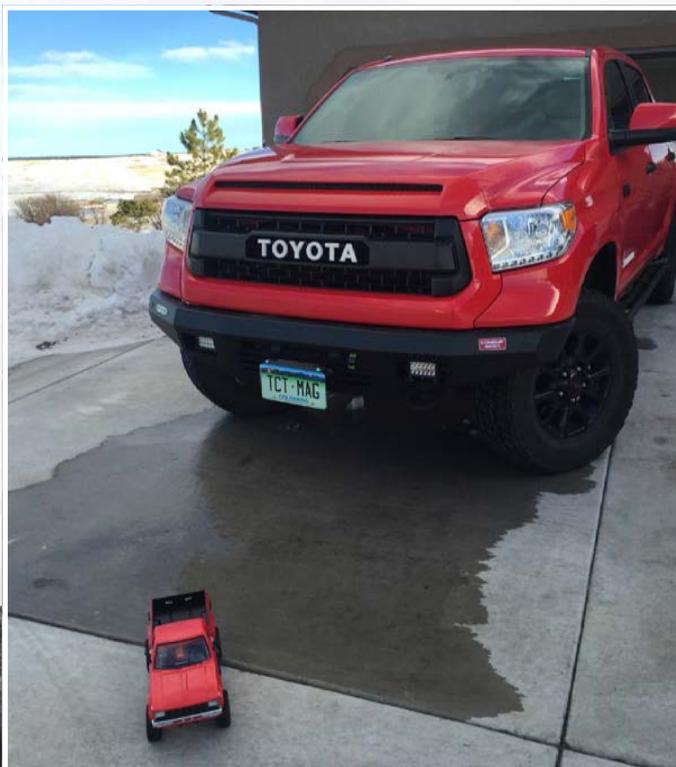
Thus far I've managed to get the truck buried in snow, flipped on the kiddie couch in our basement, crawling over toys, climbing on rocks outside my office, and hauling a** up and down the street in Fairplay. Not bad for the first month. 😊



I intend to bring the rig on all of our trips this summer as well, so check our website and social outlets for updates. RC4WD will also be sending a few licensed upgrades for the truck, so it'll be exciting to get those installed and personalize this rig a bit.



Finally, several of our editors have also been busy building and modifying RC trucks. We'll do a full roundup of their trucks on our website this summer. Do you have a killer RC Toyota? Send us a note or post on our Facebook page, we'd love to feature your mini-rig. 🇺🇸



A New Chapter from Cooper Tires the Discoverer STT Pro

By Bob Holliday

With a long successful history in the mud-terrain tire market, Cooper has finally found an adequate replacement for their renowned Discoverer STT. After years of R&D, Cooper released their newest mud-terrain option, the Discoverer STT Pro. Cooper takes great pride in the STT Pro and they have every right to.



After putting 40,000 hard miles on our old STT set, we were able to take a first-hand look at the remodel and how it stacks up against the original.



The STT Pro utilizes Cooper's patented Armor-Tek3 sidewall construction, which consists of a full 3-ply carcass with the third ply overlaying at an angle to maximize carcass protection off-road. Cooper uses a chemically infused silica and carbon black tread compound to optimize wet traction both on and off-road. Their new compound should also help improve stopping distances as well as improving rolling resistance to improve fuel economy.



Cooper also redesigned the inner tread layout by using a 3-2 alternating pattern that provides several benefits to include: reduced road noise, increased stability and handling, balanced wear, increased mud and soft terrain traction along with reduced tendency for vehicle drift. We can say first hand that the tire noise has noticeably been reduced from the original STT design.



Within the tread redesign, Cooper has included some exclusive features to add even more performance out of the STT Pro. Asymmetrical scallops on alternating lugs direct mud into mud scoops which provide improved traction in mud. You will also notice mud release dimples along the shoulder tread block walls that create mini air pockets, which help prevent mud from sticking between the tread blocks and aid in self-cleaning capabilities. Found between the treads, raised rubber ribs and pads were placed to provide extra rubber gauge in the widest portions to help resist stone drilling and impact damage.



Found between the shoulder lugs and the side biter cleats, is a small groove that generates a designed flex point in the tire. This capacity to flex provides a smoother ride by helping to dampen impact on rough roads and gravel. This also allows for the tire to flex easily when aired down, allowing the side biters to better conform around objects and work together with the main tread pattern for optimal traction.



Our 2006 Tacoma was used for our testing and has seen its fair share of variable terrain and conditions with the STT Pro. Through the rugged mountains of Colorado to the vast deserts of Utah, our early tests were filled with adventure. The STT Pro is very comparable to the original STT when taking on the rocky terrain found out west where grip and durability are key components for that terrain.



Having great off-road performance while maintaining long tread life is where I see the STT Pro really standing out amongst the crowd.

A common battle with tires with their on and off-road trade-offs is the level of grip versus long-term tire wear. The STT Pro, similar to the original STT, are not the “gripiest” on the rocks. They are, however, showing great long-term life expectations as we approach 10,000 miles on them. Having great off-road performance while maintaining long tread life is where I see the STT Pro really standing out amongst the crowd.



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This past fall, we were able to get a taste of northeast wheeling and quickly got introduced to the STT Pro's ability to handle mucky trail conditions. We were impressed by their ability to really dig into the ground and keep our rig moving forward. Aired down, the side biters were able to aid in traction very well, both on ground and up against the rut walls.



A concern for those who run mud-terrain tires in the northern and/or mountain states, is winter performance. I for one was very eager to see how the new design would do in the winter time given the new tread pattern and additional tread siping. From what I've experienced so far during the easy going Vermont winter, is an overall improvement in winter road performance. The current winter is not your typical northeast winter, however, we have had a handful of icy commutes to tackle and so far, we are impressed with the new design for winter performance.

Final thoughts on our initial review of the Cooper Discoverer STT Pro are positive. If you were a fan of the original STT, don't be too worried about change. Cooper has passed the torch to a worthy replacement. ❤️





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White Rim Trail Experience

(and Planning Advice)

by Scott Hunt

It's 4 a.m. the day before Christmas Eve. This might sound early, but for a snow plow driver it's more like sleeping in for 3 hours. As I quickly donned some snow boots and coat to head out into the cold, I could tell my wife was more bummed than usual about the alarm clock having gone off because this time she actually had to get up. Two months of planning had led up to this moment, and it was time to book our adventure on the White Rim Road.

Some of the trail books would suggest that you can book campsites six months in advance, but this is false. It can be done exactly four months to the day you plan to arrive. This is a very popular trail, and with only 20 campsites along the trail's 100 miles, it fills up very quick. Case in point: We had a plan B in place to run the route in the opposite direction if the two sites we wanted were already reserved. When my wife logged in to make our reservation at 0400 hours, our first choice sites were already taken and as she moved on to plan B, (more like plan D) we reserved the last two available on the route for those dates ... at 4 a.m. Next time we will be up at midnight to make our reservations.





PHOTO BY SCOTT JOSEPH HUNT 2015

Different types of back-country permits exist: day-use, overnight, river and special-use permits. If you intend to drive or ride the White Rim in one day, a day-use permit can be acquired at the visitor center or ranger station the day before, or day of your trip. I would not recommend doing this trail in a day, as there is far too much amazing scenery to appreciate in one continuous 11-hour drive.

We reserved our overnight permit with our campsites since the permit is required to be able to camp. *Camping in non-designated areas is strictly prohibited.* Make sure to read all the regulations and requirements for the type of permit you need. Back-country permit and campsite reservations can be made at canypermits.nps.gov.



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOSEPH HUNT 2015

The trail can be done in either direction: Clockwise or counter-clockwise. I can't say for sure if I would prefer one direction over the other, but we started in Mineral Bottom (counter-clockwise, plan B) and camped in two different spots along the route to make sure we saw as much as we could. Strictly speaking, this is a moderate 4WD trail that can be done in a stock, high-clearance 4WD with low-range. Aside from a few notable obstacles, the trail is easy to navigate, though I would urge caution for full-size and/or long wheelbase vehicles. An experienced driver who won't get too "twitchy" on a steep, narrow shelf-road is a plus too. Passing isn't possible in areas like the Murphy Hogback, but for the most part, you can see far enough up or down the more dangerous sections before taking your turn.

Another small concern that we read about, and actually experienced while on the trail, are trail closures. Leave yourself plenty of time to get in or out. On our second night, a windy thunderstorm moved in. For hours, the truck and roof top tent shook, while sheets of rain approached sideways like the nozzles in a car-wash. Getting any sleep was laughable. Storms can be violent in the desert, and the next morning we heard from a passer-by that the Shafer switchbacks had been closed earlier that morning due to muddy conditions. The nice thing about driving the trail counter-clockwise is that Potash Road exits just before the switchbacks where closures are common, so it provides a bailout option if you're close to the exit point. We lucked out, and were able to finish the trail via Shafer as it had re-opened before we arrived. If it rains, you may have to take out a second mortgage to get the red mud off your rig when you return home.

ATVs, UTVs and OHVs are not permitted. Motorcycles must be licensed and highway-legal. I'm sure some will find this annoying, but I couldn't have been happier as it added almost complete serenity to the outstanding backdrop Canyonlands National Park provides in spades. As we plodded along the gorgeous desert landscape, there were times when we didn't see another human for more than an hour. I was so relaxed, that returning to Moab after completing the trail



PHOTO BY ALEX MOLICK, CAPTURE COLORADO PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOSEPH HUNT 2015

nearly put me on the verge of an anxiety attack. I admit to being a bit of a recluse, and there was an event going on in town.

This was a definite bucket-list item for my wife and I, as we continue to seek adventure further from our home at the base of the Rocky Mountains. This is one of the coolest adventures we have had in a vehicle and we will return to do it again. With all our back-country adventures, we strive to Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace. Our National Parks are certainly no exception, so please keep it clean, be safe and remember extra camera batteries.

Scott is a contributor for TCT Magazine and an Assistant Editor for ForgeOverland.com. 🇺🇸



PHOTO BY SCOTT JOSEPH HUNT 2015

FJ Cruiser Rear Link Repair and Upgrade

By: Kayla Kotash and Bob Holliday

A close-up photograph showing a person's hands working on a metal rear link assembly. The person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt. The assembly consists of several cylindrical metal components, including a large brass-colored bushing and a smaller metal component. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the vehicle's suspension system.

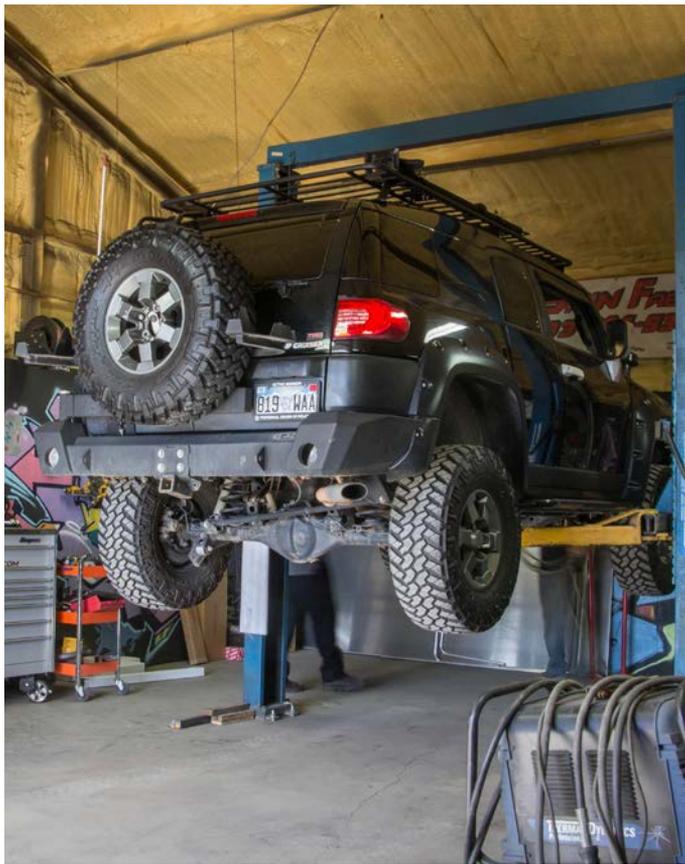
Rear links/control arms are commonly upgraded or simply replaced on vehicles, as it is a crucial component of the suspension system. Link replacement is beneficial for those who may want a smoother ride and a stronger suspension, or those of us who have damaged our link systems. Link damage may become apparent from an accident, trail damage, worn out bushings or ball joints, improper use or stress from other synchronized parts in disrepair. This can be a pricey repair, upgrade or both, so it is important to research the quality of different parts and brand while also ensuring

the modification is done right the first time. Alternatively, if you do not plan to upgrade your suspension system, the rear links/control arms should not be overlooked when maintaining and improving your vehicle. It is important to pay attention to irregular sounds and feels, and look over your vehicle and undercarriage for signs of damaged parts during regular maintenance.

With the four-link suspension, each link is designed with a specific purpose. Each link component is formulated to

work together to ensure your axle stays where it should be and moving appropriately throughout the cycling process. If this system is damaged or in disrepair, you may encounter some symptoms that include but are not limited to: poor handling, a clunk type noise or feel when shifting, or a clunk type noise or feel when letting on or off the gas. It is important to note that most unusual noises and feels are not standard, and should be properly diagnosed by your mechanic and not put off. If parts such as upper and lower links are not seen and repaired timely, the vehicle maybe rendered as unsafe for travel.

Soon after we experienced the eerie “clunk” when shifting, accompanied by an abnormal feel with gas acceleration and deceleration on the 2007 FJ Cruiser SE, we decided to take the FJ on a trip to InSain Fabrication in Thornton Colorado for a closer look. With the vehicle lifted off the ground and the suspension system extended down, the diagnosis and picture was evident.



We pinpointed wallowed out bolt holes which grew over time on the rear mounts which needed to be a tight fit. With the bolts unsecured to the mount, it permitted movement of the link system and create our infamous “clunk.” The repair was then converted into a two-stage upgrade. Do

not replace the link components with new parts while leaving the mounting holes in disrepair. Without repair and construction to the irregular holes, the suspension will continue to shift, the sound and feel of the abrasive “clunk” will still be evident and the vehicle may be deemed unsafe for travel.



InSain Fab constructed washers, which were then welded over the existing holes to create a precise round bolt hole, all while strengthening the mount.

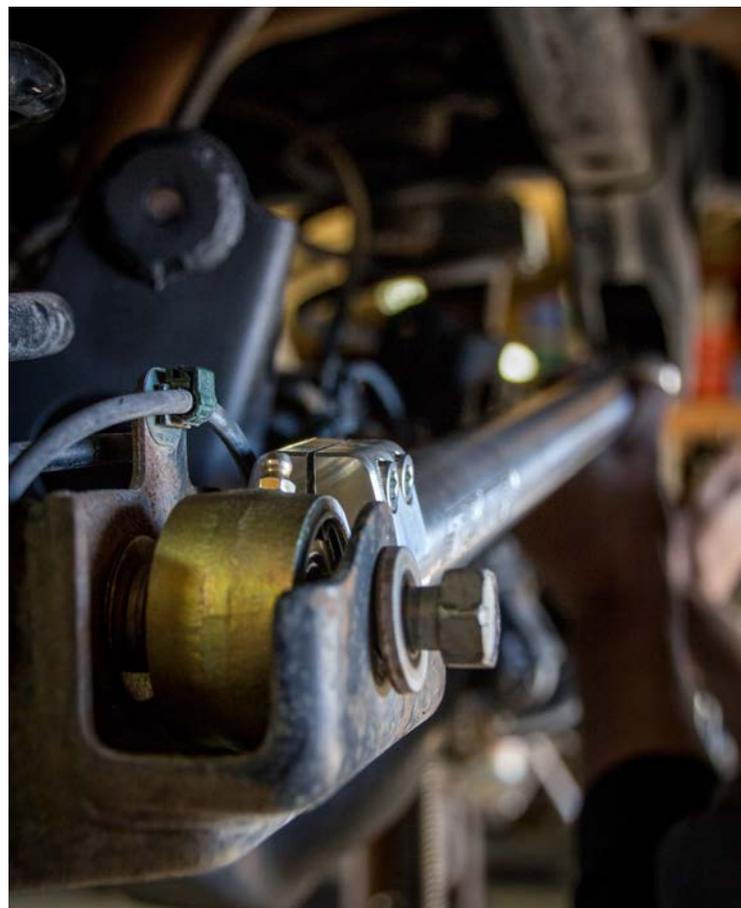


After problem number one was fixed, we were able to move onto the fun upgrade! When we purchased the 2007 FJ, it already contained aftermarket links, since stock links on the Toyota FJ Cruiser and 4Runners tend to be restrictive and delicate. We steered away from the old aftermarket link system and replaced them with a set of aluminum links from Toytec Lifts by Rokmen Off Road. These links created by Rokmen Off Road are made from solid 7075 aluminum, topped off with dual Johnny Joints for maximum bind free articulation.



Rokmen Off Road is known for providing exceptional quality and strength in their products and the Toytec links by Rokmen are no different. Their design allows the components to be completely adjustable to set correct pinion angle for lifted vehicles. Unlike typical heim joints, the Johnny Joints are cushioned with internal bushings to provide a comfortable ride on and off road. Each end is rebuildable and greasable for easy service and maintenance. The fully adjustable panhard bar allows you to center your

axle under your rig to restore proper rear axle alignment and eliminate uneven and accelerated tire wear problems.



First step is obvious, out with the old to make way for the new. Sometimes bolts can be stubborn and you might need some persuasive measures to make way for the new parts. Sometimes a little heat can be applied to free stubborn bolts, other times a cutoff wheel is needed. If the latter is used, be careful not to damage the mounts.



The good news is, link replacement for the normal upgrade, can be done by the owner themselves with capable tools, a jack and stands as well as accurate research. An alignment may be all that you need after the work is completed.

Because of the extensive hole repair, welding and the need for a precise diagnosis, we were lucky to be able to work with the InSain Fab shop in the case of the 2007 FJ Cruiser.



As a good starting point for adjustments, use a long bolt to match up the old ends to the new link ends. Final adjustments will need to be made after to get the most out of the upgrade, but this will get specs close enough to drive to get a proper alignment.



Upper and lower links should be adjusted to their final lengths with the vehicle on the ground. This allows for proper measurement of pinion angles at ride height. When lengths are final, the arms are tightened down at both ends using a jam nut to prevent unwanted adjustments. While the panhard bar utilizes a Pinch Lock system to prevent movement after adjustments are made.



Final alignment and pinion angle adjustments are recommended to be performed by a qualified technician with knowledge on adjustable linked suspension.

Rokmen kits available for purchase at:

<http://www.rokmen.com/toyota/fj-cruiser-07-09/suspension-components.html>

Toytec kits available for purchase at:

https://toyteclifts.3dcartstores.com/Other-Suspension-Parts_c_71.html





2015 Wild West Overland Trip

Story by Jordyn Pitts with input from Joey Pitts



PHOTO BY JOSEPH HAEBERLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Catching the sunset before the super moon in Laramie, WY.

This past September, Joey and Jordyn Pitts of Potts-Stop Adventures decided to set off on a road trip to the Rocky Mountains and surrounding areas. They started their 21 day trip in Paradise, Texas and traveled with their two dogs through eight states in their 2014 Toyota Trail Edition 4Runner. While on their journey, they primarily chose to camp and live out of their Little Guy, Boss Edition teardrop camper. This is the first of a 2-part series.

Planning a twenty-one day road trip can be a bit overwhelming. Actually, it's incredibly overwhelming. It took me several hours and many weeks to figure out the major places we wanted to visit. After what seemed like an eternity, it was finally time for us to leave our little town of Paradise, Texas and head out to the Wild West! We began our 21-day, overland anniversary adventure in our newly-lifted, Toyota 4Runner, which totes along our teardrop camper.

Our first main destination was the never disappointing Salida, Colorado. One of my favorite things about a road trip is trying out great new food destinations along the way. If you ever find yourself in Salida, don't leave before you try out Moonlight Pizza. Add cream cheese to your pie; you will have no regrets. After lunch and a stroll around the town with the pups, we made our way to the KOA campground in Buena Vista, Colorado. This campground boasts gorgeous views of the Collegiate Peaks mountain range. Just wait until sunset; you won't be sorry.

After setting up camp, I told Joey I had an anniversary surprise for him. Quick side note: Every vehicle we own somehow makes its way off-road not too long after we purchase it. The 4Runner is mine and I make every effort I can to let Joey know that. I don't care if it's meant to go off-road, I don't want it scratched, dented, dinged, etc. So when Joey decided a month prior to our trip that we needed to lift the rig (3-inch Old Man Emu Medium Duty springs—rear and 2.5-inch TOYTEC—front) and replace the original highway tires with the all new BFGoodrich A/T KO2's, I knew the inevitable was coming. I decided to embrace the inevitable and told him we had a mini off-road adventure we should go on; The Aspen Ridge Trail.

My research led me to believe this trail would be a beautiful way to see the changing aspens and boy, was Google right! Like any responsible adventurer, we left with less than a quarter tank of gas and hoped for the best (just kidding, we don't recommend that). The trail actually dumps out back into Salida, but we didn't mind backtracking, especially without the added weight of the trailer. This was essentially the maiden voyage for the 4Runner. I would recommend airing down a bit because of the trail's rocky nature, but this trail could easily be done (weather permitting) in almost any vehicle with a slight amount of clearance.



Stopped along the scenic Aspen Ridge Trail near Salida, CO.

The views were killer. The dogs made a couple of new cow friends along the way (Be aware! They often stand in the road.) and the trail was only a couple of hours long. The sunset near the end of the trail was such a beautiful sight and we were able to make it to the town of Salida around dusk.

The next day we tried out a local coffee shop and found our way up to the Mount Princeton trail head. Of course we put it in four-wheel-drive and drove as far up as we could. For whatever reason, hiking a 14er has always been on my bucket list. I am in no way an avid hiker but I still just couldn't pass this opportunity up. If you think the Collegiate Peaks are daunting from the town of Buena, I dare you to make your way past the tree line. That's a long scramble up for a bunch of low-altitude Texans. We made it way further than we ever imagined we would, but near the summit we decided to turn around because the dog's paws were getting raw. The dogs had so much energy left but we bipeds were beat. What better way to finish off the day than dinner with a new-found Toyota friend—shout out to Matt Berzon and his 4Runner! Definitely check out Eddy Line Brewery if you find yourself in Buena Vista, and grab a pumpkin beer and a burger.



4Runner taking on the Mt Princeton trail near Buena Vista, Co.



We made it to the top of Mt Princeton!

The next few days we found ourselves traversing through central Colorado and on to the Rocky Mountain National Park. This was one of my favorite days of the trip. The views were unbelievable everywhere we turned. The drive through RMNP way exceeded my expectations. The sun was starting to set when we drove through and the light bouncing off the mountains was to die for. The end of the park road left us in Estes Park which we had originally planned to stay in. However, a short drive through the downtown area had us hightailing it out of there away from the masses. We decided to head on to our next destination in

Ft. Collins, Colorado. We spent a day or two roughing it in a hotel and checking out the stores and eateries. If you have the chance, make sure to stop by the JAX Outdoor Store - (leave your wallet in the car). Don't forget to grab some grub at any of the several restaurants around town; our favorites are Yeti Bar and Grill, Rio Grande, Blue Agave, and Snooze.



Freeeeddom! Landi enjoying the Rocky Mountain National Park.

The next portion of our trip had us heading into Wyoming. Laramie is where we stopped first and met up with an awesome photographer, Joe Haeberle. We lucked out and made another new friend on the trip. He captured some great shots of us and the rig, a couple of which are featured with this article. After a day or two in Laramie, we made the long trek north to the Grand Tetons. After a day's worth of driving, the majestic peaks were finally in sight. I was in awe at the ominous, craggily peaks. They aren't your average mountain range and I found myself taking way too many pictures of them.

We made our way into the little community of Moose where a local bar tender told us where we could find primitive camping. We nabbed a great little spot down by a river where we celebrated our anniversary with some grilled bratwursts, while we sipped on a Jenny Lake Lager. It's the simple things! We spent most of the night warming ourselves around a fire while I fretted about being eaten by a bear. Sunrise proved we had survived the night with no such intruder, so we moseyed on over to Jackson, Wyoming. This is an area of our trip where I wished we had allowed ourselves more time. Jackson is such an interesting place; we found it to be one of our favorite parts of the trip.



PHOTO BY JORDYN PITTS

Appreciating the Grand Tetons near Moose, WY.

The story continues with Part 2 of Toyota Cruisers & Trucks Magazine. 📖

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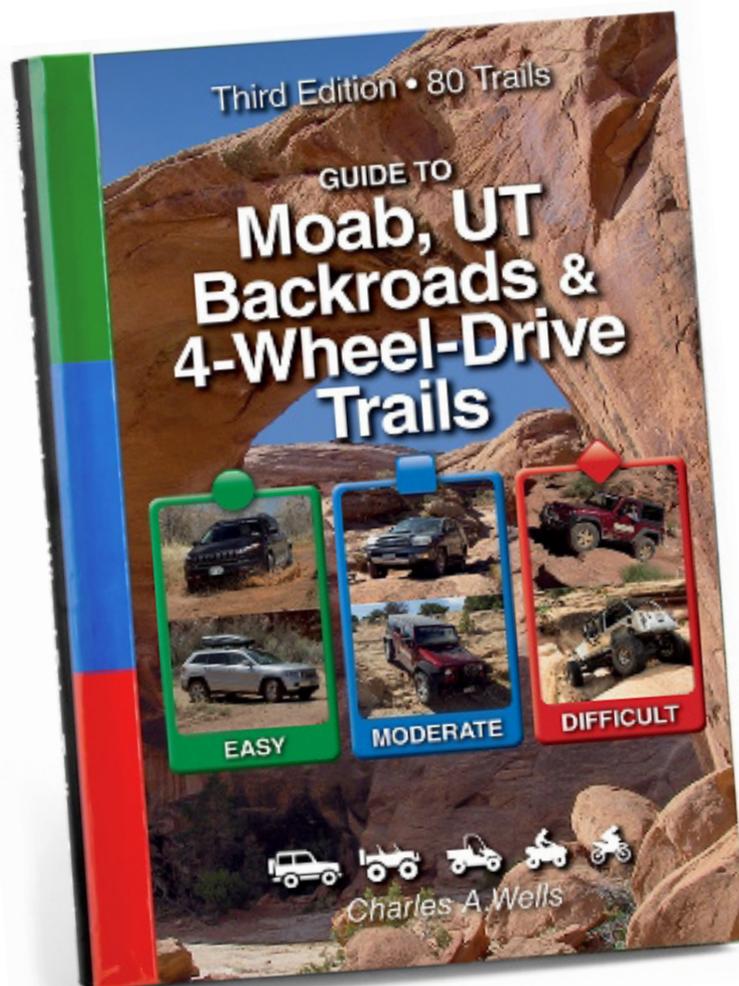
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FunTreks

All-New Guide to Moab, UT Backroads & 4WD Trails, 3rd Edition

By Shane Williams

Due to my great friendship with the guys over at FunTreks Guidebooks, I was able to get my hands on a very-early copy of their all-new Moab guidebook. While this version doesn't cover the entire state of Utah as some of us hoped it would, it is by far their best Moab area guidebook to date.



Every previously published trail has been re-driven by the FunTreks Scout Team, and the publisher has added two new areas and 25 new trails to this edition. Eleven of the new trails are included in the new areas: The Canyonland Maze District, and finally the San Rafael Swell. This new information is perfect for those planning extended overland trips to either area.

This Moab book is also their newest to use the easy to use trail listing format, which now all FunTreks 4WD books use. Most trails are listed on facing pages, so it's easy to see

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As we've come to expect from FunTreks, there is plenty of other information included as well

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photos, a custom map, and a mileage log that lists each waypoint along the route. Some of the larger areas (such as Area BFE), span more pages due to the vast amount of information, but the format remains easy to use.

With 224 pages, over 500 photos, and a total of 80 trails in and around Moab, this book is currently the top resource for exploring the area. As we've come to expect from FunTreks, there is plenty of other information included as well: Local area details, brief sections on history

AREA 6 Green = Easy, Blue = Moderate, Red = Difficult

#	Name	Pg.
76.	Buckhorn Draw to Wedge Overlook	214
77.	Devil's Racetrack	216
78.	Swasey Cabin	218
79.	Reds Canyon	220
80.	Behind the Reef	222

San Rafael Swell

Over 2,000 miles of roads and OHV trails crisscross these stunningly beautiful lands. Most of the main county roads are well graded, allowing for speedy and comfortable access to the trails. Emery County's OHV laws are similar to Grand County, meaning you can ride unlicensed vehicles on most non-paved county roads that we describe here (see OHV laws on page 21).

We used a great printed map titled "San Rafael Motorized Route Designations." It's out of print, but a new version is planned soon. Call the BLM Field Office in Price, UT, at 435-636-3600 and ask about it. The old map is available as a PDF on the Emery County website, but there are so many different maps, it's hard to find this particular one. We put a link to it on our website at www.FunTreks.com.

To reach the San Rafael Swell, follow I-70 west past Green River to Exit 131. To enter the Swell at Temple Mountain, head south on Highway 24 from I-70, Exit 149. Go about 24 miles and turn right at mile marker 136.

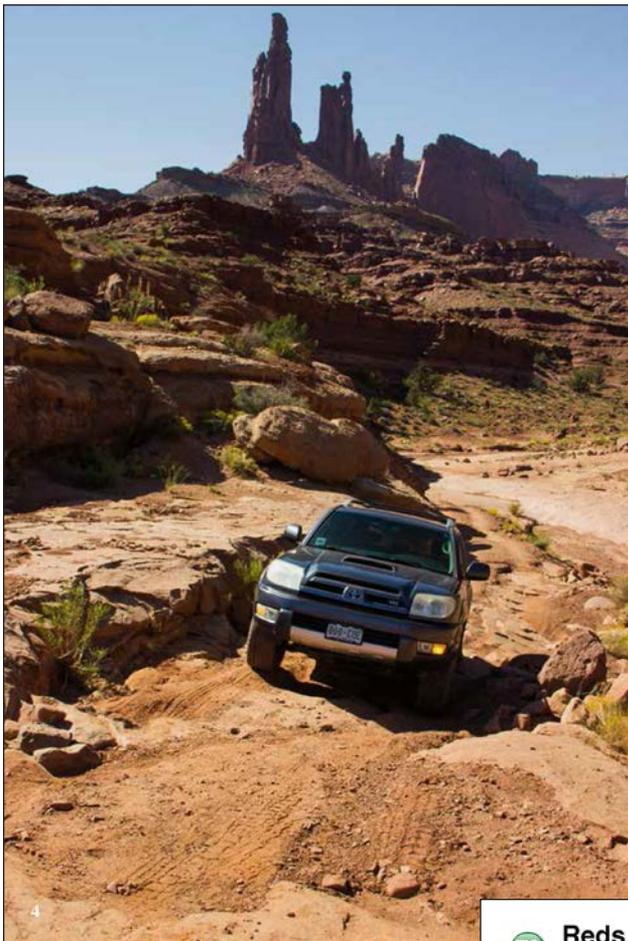
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FunTreks now sells GPS data cards for every one of their books along with waterproof area-maps for a few areas in Colorado.

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and geology, contact information for land managers, safety tips, and ideas on how to wheel responsibly.

Pre-orders for the new book have already begun, and I've been told it will be available as early as March 2016. The announcement of this book came with an all-new FunTreks Website as well (Disclaimer: I helped FunTreks develop their new website). The new site is easier to use, and includes several new product lines. In addition to their award winning guidebooks, FunTreks now sells GPS data cards for every one of their books along with waterproof area-maps for a few areas in Colorado. They're also now selling ready-to-run GPS units from Garmin that are compatible with their data cards.

If you're planning an off-road or overland adventure to the Moab area, take a close look at this book. We haven't been in Moab with the new book yet, but we expect it to be as accurate as all of their other publications. 📖

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If you're planning an off-road or overland adventure to the Moab area, take a close look at this book.

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79 Reds Canyon

AREA 6 map on page 212



Make sure you see ghost town at Lucky Strike Mine.



Most of the roads, when dry, are wide, smooth and easy to drive.



Tomsich Mine (stay back).

Historical Highlight: In 1949, The Atomic Energy Commission started a program to encourage prospectors to search for uranium. Mines and shack towns popped up all over this area. Entrances to most mines have been boarded up for safety reasons. As of this writing, there was still something to see at the Tomsich Mine and the Lucky Strike Mine. Road kiosks near both locations for more info.

Overview: An easy, scenic drive to a beautiful, remote canyon. See Hondo Arch, Tomsich Mine, Lucky Strike Ghost Town and more. Take optional side trip on very scenic Hidden Splendor Road. ATVs and UTVs should trailer to near start of loop at Wpt. 02. Roads are wide enough to park along edge. Lots of side roads to explore.

Rating: Easy. The main roads are mostly wide and smooth and suitable for passenger cars when dry. However, about half of Reds Canyon follows a sandy wash and canyon bottom, where you may sometimes need 4-wheel drive. Storms and flash floods can make con-

ditions more difficult. Go with another vehicle if possible.

Stats: Length: 47.1 miles. Time: 4 to 5 hours plus 1.5 hours additional for round trip of Hidden Splendor Road. High point: 6,923 ft. Best time: Mid-March to mid-Nov. Hot in summer.

Current Conditions: BLM Field Office in Price, UT. Call 435-636-3600.

Getting There: Get off Interstate 70 at Exit 131. On the south side of the exit there is a large circular parking area where you can stage. It is legal to ride on the chip-sealed frontage road.

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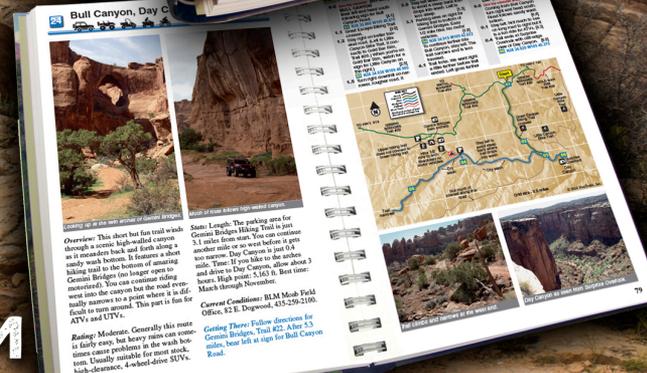
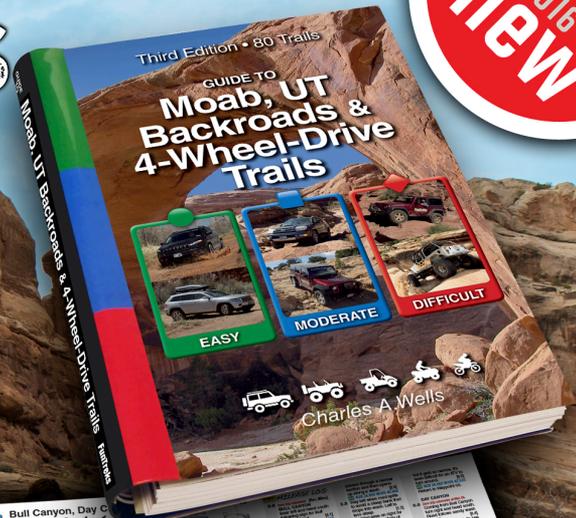


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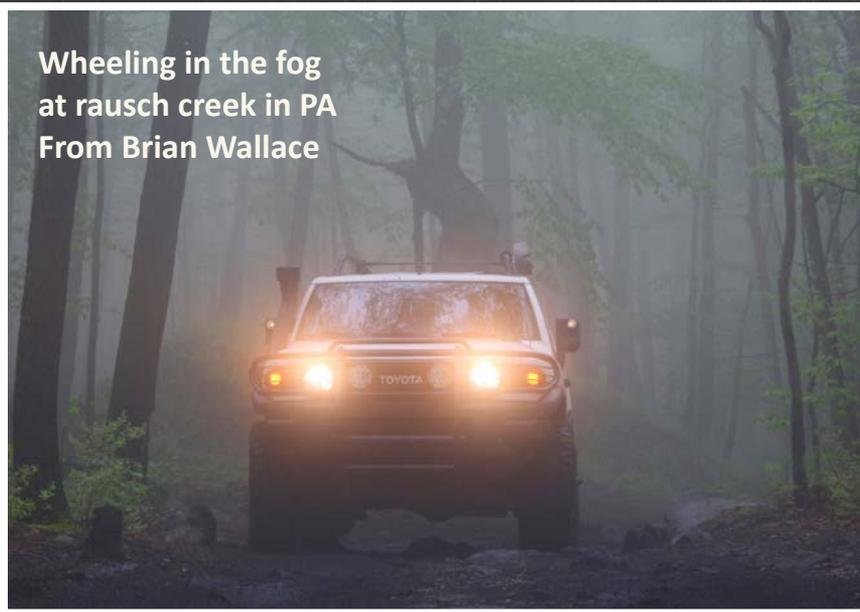
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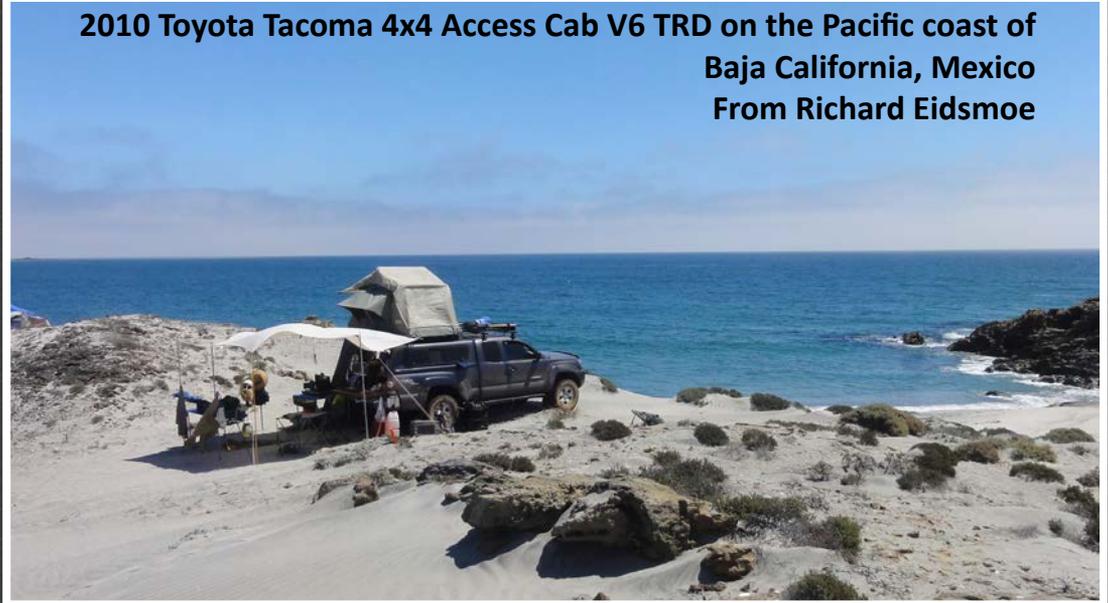
Wheeling in the fog
at rausch creek in PA
From Brian Wallace



Accidental advertisement. This
rental 4Runner got us to Mammoth
Mountain, California.
From Kenneth Ariza



2010 Toyota Tacoma 4x4 Access Cab V6 TRD on the Pacific coast of
Baja California, Mexico
From Richard Eidsmoe



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