



ROAD TRIP-USA

British travelers tour the states through Bend company

By Jim Whitty

The Bulletin

Richard Clarke, Liz Rudman, Steve and Ally Smith aren't your everyday, cookie-cutter, government-issue tourists.

When the four Birmingham, England, residents crossed the pond this month to see the States, they were united in a common goal: They wanted to see the states.

It turns out, they saw and felt and immersed themselves in the American West and came away with a better understanding of the way things really are in this vast region that they'd only seen on the telly. All this aside the big, Industrial Strength motorcycles they rented from Bend-based Roadtrip-USA.

This reporter first caught up with the intrepid travelers on a flight from San Francisco to Redmond before their real journey had even started. This would be their first visit to the United States (except for the Smiths' brief trip to New York some time ago). The small party of friends — two homicide detectives, a police officer and a public relations specialist — would de-plane in Bend and get their first real glimpse of the West.

The next morning they hit the open road bound for Crater Lake National Park. Their 19-day tour eventually took them to the Redwood country, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lake Tahoe, Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, the Yellowstone area, Ketchikan, Idaho, and Northeast Oregon.

But it was the small towns and the people they met in them that left the most lasting impressions.

"We saw a good cross section," Clarke said. "We saw what we perceived to be the real America."

And what is that?

There was the rustic woman with the gun on her hip offering friendly travel advice. There were the locals in the saloon celebrating Steve



Photos by Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Top: Birmingham, England, residents Richard Clarke and Liz Rudman, left, ride with Steve Smith and his wife Ally Smith on the Cascade Lakes Highway. Devils Lake is in the background. **Above:** Checking their exact location on a map, Steve Smith, Richard Clarke, Liz Rudman and Ally Smith take a break in front of Sparks Lake.

Smith's birthday. There was the "staggering scenery," the untamable miles stretching between small towns, the character who looked like every member of ZZ Top.

"We wanted a trip that got us off the beaten track," Smith said.

And when they pulled into the first of many little outposts with a railroad track and a station fronting main street, they knew they'd found it.

"This is it," Smith remembers thinking. "It's real. It exists."

Perhaps their biggest impression was the friendliness and openness of the people they met along the way.

Clarke said the group met a lot of "friendly chaps" on their 3,000-mile journey.

"There's something for everybody in America," Rudman offered.

And a few things they wished they'd avoided.

Las Vegas, with its gaudy neon and around-the-clock glitz, was not their cup of tea. Neither was being stopped by a California Highway Patrol officer. And the Northern California coast, though beautiful, was soaked in when they passed through.

The British travelers stayed in hotels rooms each night pre-booked by

Roadtrip-USA. Roadtrip-USA, the brainchild of transplanted Brit Scott Sargent, offers motorcycle tour packages with an emphasis on riders from the United Kingdom.

The scenic highlight of their trip? Sunrise over the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, they all pretty much agreed. "We've seen America," Rudman said. "Not Disneyland."

"It's just like the cowboy films," Ally Smith added.

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