



Ketchum was a beautiful mountain resort, buzzing with people. We managed to find a room, and it turned out that both the Dalai Lama and Willie Nelson were in town. Willie's outdoor concert was sold out. But even before we got into the first bar of the evening, four middle-aged women heard us chatting about the gig, and announced that they had a spare ticket if we wanted it. Clearly we weren't going to turn down a \$40 ticket for free so we took them up on the offer and headed down to the concert to see if we could pick up some more. Within five minutes we had acquired another free ticket. How often would that happen in the UK? We found a third for half

price; soon all three of us were mingling with a crowd of Stetson-waving cowboys and cowgirls yee-ha'ing to Willie's classic tunes.

After a late start, we carried on east to Yellowstone National Park, where the road circumnavigated a 100-mile loop around the perimeter of this ancient volcanic crater. We stopped often, to take pictures of the amazing scenery, but also to avoid wildlife, or cars. Ben was forced on to loose gravel by cars stopping without warning to watch a herd of wild buffalo.

He lost the front and came off, though he wasn't hurt and the bike was largely undamaged, except for the right-hand pannier snapping off at

the bracket. We strapped the box onto the seat with bungee straps and carried on.

Low on fuel, we were keen to finish the loop and get back to the petrol station before it closed. We were probably going a bit too fast when I looked in the mirror and saw blue flashing lights scream past Ben, overtake me and then pass Gareth, before slowing to pull us all in. As we stopped, the annoyed-looking park warden yelled at us to, 'beat it'.

Finally leaving the twisty roads of the Rockies behind, we entered into a different landscape. It was fascinating to watch, as we ate up the miles. I spent hours wondering at the nature of the geology



Would you like to ride the USA with Road Trip?

They provide the bikes and can plan routes, itineraries and accommodation – all you need to do is turn up and ride. In next month's Open Road, you'll get the chance to win another one of these fabulous trips. Don't miss it.



and weather that had created the mountains we had just left, and formed the rocky outcrops and barren plains that we were now riding through.

The roads became straighter, stretching to the horizon, and it was easy to let your thoughts drift as miles passed without notice. Late in the afternoon the geology changed dramatically as we neared Moab, and Arches National Park.

It had been cold in the Rockies, but it got hotter as we headed south towards the Arizona Desert, passing through Monument Valley, the landscape made famous by hundreds of Wild-West cowboy movies.

In the heat of Arizona we shed most of

our protective clothing and were riding in T-shirts and jeans.

It was late when we finally arrived at Grand Canyon. The sun was setting as we pulled up at the first overlook on the south rim and gazed across the eight-mile gap of shadowy ravines to the north. Deep below us, the canyon plunged over a mile down through a maze of ravines that turned pink and red under the setting sun.

After another cold night camping, we spent most of the next day walking the south rim and taking in the breathtaking scenery.

By the time we left we had only managed to get a 100 miles under our belts before

stopping at a town called Seligman, an old trading outpost, located on one of the only remaining original sections of Route 66.

We stayed in Motel Route 66 and the next day fulfilled a dream by riding the Mother Road, taking us close to the Hoover Dam on the edge of Las Vegas. Crossing the dam, we left Arizona and entered Nevada.

That night, we came over a peak to see the millions of lights of Las Vegas below us. After weeks of open road and countryside it was overwhelming to be on the main strip, surrounded by the huge hotels and casinos, with their dazzling illuminations and thousands of