

THE RIMROCKER TRAIL



Part 3 - Highway 141 to the Colorado-Utah State Line



If you have traveled the route as described in Part 2 and have arrived at Highway 141, turn left onto the highway and proceed south for 1.4 miles to continue on the Rimrocker Trail. Turn right on R13 Road, zero your trip meter, and cross the bridge over the Dolores River (GPS N38 25.573 W108 49.39).

An optional side trip for street legal vehicles is to continue past R13 Road on Highway 141 for approximately 0.6 miles to a right turn to an old coke oven located between the highway and the river. The oven was built in the late 1800s to convert green coal into coke coal, which burns much hotter with almost no smoke. The coke from this oven was likely used by blacksmiths who forged iron for the construction of the Hanging Flume.

Continuing the side trip southward on Highway 141, go 1.7 miles (past mile marker 82) to a pullout and overlook of the Hanging Flume, which is below the highway hanging off the rock wall of the Dolores River channel (2.3 miles from R13 Road). Construction of the Hanging Flume started in 1887 and was completed in 1891. The flume was to provide water under a head of pressure for the Lone Tree Placer Mine's hydraulic mining operations along the banks of the river. Some of the wood used to build the flume came from timber cut on Pine Flat and Carpenter Ridge near Buckeye Reservoir. The Rimrocker Trail eventually passes through both of these areas. The timber that was cut on Carpenter Ridge was hauled down to the river on a portion of the Rimrocker Trail to Red Canyon, and then down Red Canyon to a ford of the river.

This side trip can be extended even further by continuing southward on Highway 141 another 1.25 miles (3.6 miles from R13 Road), to an unmarked right turn (GPS N38 22.99 W108 48.20) after a sharp curve after mile marker 81. Follow the trail a short distance to an overlook of the confluence of the Dolores and San Miguel Rivers.

If you have elected to spend an extra day (or even two) exploring in the Nucla-Naturita area, there are even more places to explore. You can pick up brochures for the following at the Naturita Visitor's Center: The Wild Horses of Disappointment Valley, Long Park Mine Tour, Bull Canyon Tour, and Paradox Valley Petroglyph Tour. Other options farther afield include Forest Service Road (FSR) 512 (aka Hanks Valley Road) and FSR 557 (aka Horsefly Point Road) are both relatively easy "in and out" trails which start off of Sanborn Park Road, northeast of Norwood.

If you have spent some time exploring these roads and are ready to continue on the Rimrocker Trail, you can reach it from Naturita by heading north on Highway 141 approximately 23.9 miles to R13 Road, just beyond mile marker 84. Once there, turn left, zero your trip meter, and take the bridge over the Dolores River (GPS N38 25.573 W108 49.39).



In any case, there is plenty of room just across the R13 Road bridge over the Dolores River - to regroup with trail mates, air down your tires if desired, or just take a few minutes to enjoy the scenery. Continue on the Rimrocker Trail around to the left on the main road. After passing through the gap in the fence, bear right at the Y intersection onto Q13 Road. The road to the left goes out to a local landmark named Biscuit Rock. Although there is very little shade in the area, it is interesting to explore. You can continue past Biscuit Rock to several old buildings, which are all that is left of an abandoned mining development.

Back on the Rimrocker Trail, Q13 Road begins a steep uphill climb, from which there will be views of the Dolores River valley, Biscuit Rock, and the scenery below. The climb will end on Carpenter Flats

and the trail heads for the Manti-La Sal National Forest to the west. Ignore the lesser roads on both the left and right and continue straight ahead. When traveling along the mesa top, pay particular attention to your map because the trail wanders a bit. Sometimes you will be on Q13 Road, but at other times the trail will take a different road to provide scenic views from roads less traveled. These include S12 Road, S10 Road, T10 Road, and R3 Road. See Inset 1 on the Rimrocker Trail map for a closer look at most of these roads. Don't worry if you happen to miss a turn for one of them, as they all rejoin Q13 Road. You'll be driving mostly through sage and junipers. There are numerous mines in this area as well, including the Little Buckhorn, Radium, Radium King and the Radium Queen mine.

NOTE: at approximately 4.5 miles from Highway 141, Q13 Road bears left and then right around a steeper climb (GPS N38 24.18, W108 52.23). Continuing straight up the climb will get you to the same point, but with a little bit of a challenge.

Continuing along the trail, the La Sal Mountains in Utah will come into view and you will rejoin Q13 Road. At approximately 10.4 or 10.5 miles from the highway (GPS N38 24.61 W108 56.52) you'll be atop Carpenter Ridge, where it is strongly suggested that you stop and enjoy the view of Paradox Valley below. Paradox Valley is a collapsed salt dome, which was created when water flowing beneath the earth's surface dissolved a subterranean layer of salt. The limestone and sandstone on top of the salt layer then collapsed, forming a valley where there was previously a dome. The valley gets its name from the fact that the Dolores River paradoxically runs across it (north-south), instead of along it (east-west). *The Hell that was Paradox*, by Howard Greager makes for interesting reading about this area.



After you pass the intersection with S8 Road, the Rimrocker Trail uses the same route as the Old Paradox Trail. Years ago, cattle from Paradox Valley were driven along the Paradox Trail to the railhead in Montrose. Eventually, 600 Road (aka Carpenter Ridge Road) will be on your left (GPS N38 25.335 W108 57.89). 600 Road drops down into Paradox Valley and heads to Paradox. This community has about 50 residents and NO services (other than Sunday church services) - no gas stations, convenience stores, etc.

Beyond the intersection with 600 Road, the Rimrocker Trail continues on Q13 Road and then turns left on R3 Road, where it traverses a shelf with spectacular views of the north end of Paradox Valley. The trail then rejoins Q13 Road and continues to

the Manti La Sal National Forest, where the road also known as FSR 0378. After entering the national forest, the Rimrocker Trail signs are brown instead of fluorescent green.

On the east side of Buckeye Reservoir is a left turn (GPS N38 26.53 W109 02.10) to a group picnic area with toilets and a wonderful view of the reservoir. Continuing on FSR 0378 (aka Q13 Road) past Buckeye Reservoir to an intersection, turn right and head northwest on FSR 0208 (aka U5 Road). At 19.4 miles from Highway 141 (GPS N38 27.33 W109 03.60) you will cross into Utah. The rest of the Rimrocker Trail, from the state line to Moab, is covered in Part 4.