

OUTLAW TRAIL - 2003 - by Marlene Moss

Stace and I just got back from the Outlaw Trail and what a ride! This was my second time – I did 5 days 2 years ago and probably didn't stop talking about it daily for months. So I finally got the chance to bring my husband so he could see it for himself. I also have a different horse so I was really looking forward to seeing how she'd handle it – my last ride was scary in places!



We probably couldn't have asked for better weather. It was a perfect year for the aspen color – everything was gold. We were just doing the long distance rides because it was more important to us to be able to do all 3 days than to push for a 55 since our summer conditioning has gotten interrupted a couple times.



We parked so our horses could be in the shade and we didn't have far to walk for water. I really felt like I could just stay there and camp for weeks.

For those of you that have done the 5 day, single base camp ride, this was essentially the first 3 days. I really wished we were able to do all 5 days, but I am at least satisfied that my husband got to do this as it sounds like the Outlaw Trail multi day ride may have come to an end. Which is really sad as I can't even imagine a ride I will enjoy more than this one, but I understand how difficult these rides are to put on and Sharon and Crockett do have some other plans.

This first day takes us north to the top of the world. You can see forest and slick rock and all the beauty Utah has to offer for miles around. Before we got to the "big climb", Stace's horse, Cody stumbled on a rock. He tried desperately to stay up, but after a few stumbled strides went to his nose and Stace went off. He got a little cut on one leg from the rock or a stick and cut the inside of his upper lip and that was all. From what I saw, I expected bloody knees, broken teeth or nose – and that is just on the horse. Since Cody tried so hard to keep from going down, Stace was able to control his fall and had a sore shoulder the next day, but that was it. We wrapped the cut on the leg even though it had stopped bleeding and walked Cody around – all looked good. Stace hopped back on, figuring we'd walk out slowly and make sure everything was ok. Not gonna happen, Cody was raring to go and jumped into a canter.

Then the "big climb". It's really weird, I remember it being steep and rocky on my last ride, but I think I must have closed my eyes. The horse I rode then panicked in close trees and wasn't good at going over downed logs at a walk. I know she scared some people with some antics when she wanted to go really fast at the bottom of the last part of the climb, but I really didn't remember a lot of the climb. This time my horse, the beautiful Kit Kourageous, handled everything like she'd been doing it all her life. She took every rock, log and turn calmly and safely – which was nice because she was very powerful up these hills and really wanted to go.

In fact she was amazing the entire ride. It was like she enjoyed every challenge and then looked for the next one. Other than a single temper tantrum being forced to stand at the finish line waiting for her turn for pulse check, she was just perfect all 3 days. You really have to love every minute on a horse like that! Of course Cody was good too, but then he always is! Stace has done an amazing job with him – they did the entire thing bitless, first with a soft side pull and then just with a rope halter.

In general, we took things pretty slow, knowing there was always lots more terrain coming – and of course, the rocks! Kit is an amazing drinker. She might not drink at the first couple opportunities, but once she starts, she doesn't miss even a mud puddle. I think she drinks more volume than any horse I've ever seen, including our mustangs. Of course I had visions of a ruptured stomach after all the recent conversations on Ridecamp, but I let her do what she needed to do with eating and drinking and she always looked good.



The third day gets us into the slick rock area where all the stories of the outlaws and Mormon pioneers abound. To get there, you have to ride over more rocks than you'd otherwise see in a lifetime, but the horses handled it really well. We led a lot. I was happy that I had easy boots on in the slickrock area – much grippier than shoes. Kit wanted to really move except in the deep sand, she didn't like that at all.

But some of the other things about this ride that are really nice is that at the ride meeting every night, Crockett tells stories about his experiences in the area and the history he's kicked up. There were several people with other stories to add. And many of the riders had done this ride many times so it was really nice wandering around talking to people. Sharon and Crockett are so great – they know every riders name and find something special to say and unique awards for everyone. And in general, everyone that did this ride was really great to talk to or ride with.

I think this ride is also an amazing bonding experience between horse and rider. I'm sure many multi-days have that effect. But it is just amazing to see what your horse is really capable of getting you through – and then still wanting more. I think Cody got LD BC 2 days and in the end tied with another horse for overall LD BC. Stace got a gorgeous picture of a horse and falcon that I'm going to have to steal some day.

So for those of you that haven't done this ride, take any opportunity you can to do whatever ride Sharon and Crockett put on – you'll have memories to last a lifetime.

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