



FUEL FOR THOUGHT

BY LANDSPEED LOUISE

“The mountains surrounding Bonneville serve as a “sky” highway for hawks migrating north to the south...”



Wonders of Wendover

What was your racing season like? Did everything go along like atomic clockwork? The speed machine came off the trailer, qualified and made its return run by Sunday morning. Happy is the worst of it. Euphoric almost describes it.

On the flip side, did nothing go right no matter what you or the team did? Did you break part after part, including all the unbreakable ones? Is the only record you set what how much got flung into the dumpster?

Some racing halted due to wind and rain. Not much, but enough to shut down the racecourses for a day. You stuck around because the machine was ready and you know the salt dries out quick.

All three of these scenarios boil down to the same thing for race teams at Bonneville. No matter what event they have entered, the question begs: what to do with all the unplanned free time? And what about family members who might get bored?

If you are like me, not a gambler, and have no interest in the casino cacophony full of slot machine ding, ding-a-lings and twinky-winky cigarette stinky cheesy lighting then have I got some good news for you.

er, because alcohol is served everyone must 21 in order to attend.

Not up for a big night? Try the Wendover Cinema and Video on Aria Blvd, just up the street from the Montego Bay.

No pool at your lodging? For a pittance of an entrance fee, Wendover Park & Recreation has a really wonderful Olympic size pool with diving boards, lap lanes, kiddie area and water slide. There are changing rooms and showers, a snack bar with snow cones and the front lobby sells swim gear and water toys at very reasonable prices. Check the hours before heading over.

For those who do partake of “pasture pool”, they ought to enjoy the 18-hole Toana Vista Golf Course with its driving range and putting greens. Inside the clubhouse there is a full-service bar, snack counter, gift shop and pros-for-hire to improve your game.

Historic Wendover Airfield Museum and gift shop is a small, but powerful scrap of American history located in the operations building just south of the WW II control tower. Built in 1940’s, there is a free, short video of the base history. Be sure to check out the scale model of the place when it was in full swing.

The autographed atomic bomb replica evokes mixed feelings making you wonder why it took two of these to get



(Gear is provided) as well as the simply curious with comfy four wheel drive tours that begin in Wendover and travel through Leppy Hills, Pilot, Toano, and the Goshute ranges. The tours are designed to comfortably take clients of all ages through these very scenic wilderness areas.

The knowledgeable, easy-going guides share great details about the areas plentiful ecology, geology, biology and wildlife peppered with the local human history. The ATV rides allow you to penetrate deeper into the mountains for some spectacular views – sunset is humbling to behold.

How about scuba diving in the desert? I was thunderstruck when The Dive Shop pros John Boynton and Bob Stell taught me, in about an hour, how to safely scuba dive in Blue Lake, a large geothermal pond located 16 miles south of Wendover on Bonneville’s edge.

With a 60-foot depth, it is a marvelous spot to not only learn, but explore. On the edge of the USAF bombing practice range, so don’t go wandering off the clearly marked gravel and dirt roads, at times a challenging commute.

Even World Finals attendees can dive comfortably because year-round bottom temperatures hover at 85°F due thanks to ever-bubbling hot springs. Surface temperatures rarely dip below the high 60s in winter. Underwater visibility of up to 40 feet is normal.

I was thrilled to see plenty of bass, sunfish and bluegills. Marvel at the objects placed on the bottom by divers that include large metal sculptures of marine animals, several boats and even a chair and television set.

John and Bob, both certified dive instructors, are happy to book a dive trip to give neophytes an underwater breathing experience or give the more serious sorts all the training required for certification. How cool can that be?

Starting with a comprehensive gear explanation topside, we entered the tepid lake and became comfortable with the scuba gear on the surface before making a descent. Down the rope we went to a platform 27-feet below hanging out to mug for the camera and then across the lake to another platform before surfacing on the other side. Always feeling safe, the trip ended with an immense sense of accomplishment tethered to honest child-

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like wonder. Closest thing to being a little mermaid that I’ll ever be!

Bubbling depths behind us, our group next hiked a Goshute Mountaintop with guides from Hawk Watch International. These naturalists not only explained, but demonstrated its catch and release process that actively protects and conserves the raptor population.

The migration season in the Goshutes coincides with the entire land speed racing season. Located 25 miles south of Wendover, the challenging hike (three hours up and one-hour down) rewards the effort with views (camera mandatory!) and possible interaction of magnificent warrior birds in the wild.

The mountains surrounding Bonneville serve as a “sky” highway for hawks migrating north to the south – some 13,000 birds were counted last year. Hawk Watch employees and volunteers capture, band and release mainly the sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, Cooper’s hawk and American Kestrel. A call to the Hawk Watch office in Salt Lake City can get you a guide who will hike up with you and explain the capture and release process.

Danger Cave, listed on the National Register of Historic Places (same as the salt flats), is a significant archaeological site located a few hundred feet north of 180 just past the first Wendover, Utah exit that drops you onto the east end of Wendover Boulevard.

The cave, first excavated in the 1950s, has yielded artifacts proving there was an active desert culture here starting 11,000 years ago. The arid landscape preserved thousands of artifacts from insects to textiles, tools, weapons and diet-snitching human paleofeces. The pickleweed might be gone, but many of today’s plants and animals within a ten-mile range are the same. The salt flats were as inhospitable “back in the day” as it is today.

Jukebox Cave, aka Picture Cave, has original rock artwork of hunters on hors-

es armed with spears and bows and arrows together with work of some smarty pants that added modern-day versions even after the iron gates were installed. The WWII service men and women laid a concrete dance floor, rigged up lighting and a jukebox powered by a generator for off-base parties attended by service personnel and their dates. Tours of the caves are offered periodically throughout the year but stewards can often meet a group for private viewings.

Use the contact list to get direct details or contact the West Wendover Welcome Center toll-free 866.299.2489 and chat with Kerrie or Linda. Ya gotta admit, ya never thought all this stuff was available in little ‘ole Wendover, now did ya?

The Dive Shop
801.295.5445
www.the-dive-shop.com

Hawk Watch International
801.484.6808 x127
www.hawkwatch.org

Historic Wendover Airfield Museum
435.665-2308
www.wendoverairbase.com

Intermountain Guide Service
877.882.4386
www.intermountainguidenevada.com

Peppermill Concert Hall 888.737.7849
www.wendoverfun.com/shows/concert_hall

Toana Vista Golf Course
775.6364.4300
www.toanavistagolf.com

Utah State Parks and Recreation
801.538.7220
www.stateparks.utah.gov

West Wendover Swimming Pool
775.664.2337
www.wendoverrec.com/index.php?p=1_6_Swimming-Pool

Wendover Cinema & Video
435.665.2628
http://wendovercinemas.com/

Thanks to Kerrie Supanich and Linda Brown of the West Wendover Welcome Center who hosted a group of journalists on a familiarization tour of the city and its surrounding area activities, there is plenty to offer up to racers, their families and crews with some time on their hands.

Starting in town and working our way out, the obvious non-casino attraction is the Concert Hall. It is well laid out, all of the 1,000 seats have cup holders and nearly all offer a good view - within 90 feet of the stage. Howev-

the Japanese Emperor’s attention. Tours of the atomic bomb loading pit, Enola Gay hangar, renovated Norden Bomb-sight building and other spots are possible depending on staff availability. Ask at the operations building front desk for a guided tour. If they are not busy, they often oblige.

Extended tours of the airfield are possible through Intermountain Guide Service (IGS) which offers a multitude of area activities for all ages, stamina and curiosity levels. IGS caters to the adventurous with back country ATV rides

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the critically acclaimed, *Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth*, a complete historical review from 1896 to 1997. She also appears in the Ab Jenkins documentary *Boys of Bonneville*.

For more details and to order, go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz.