

## Moab Pavement

For an entirely new spin on the “mountain bike Mecca,” bring your road bike. By Jayme Otto

It has become the most clichéd of clichés—Moab equals mountain biking. But the place has far more to offer (and we’re not talking about the brews at Eddie McStiffs, though they’re worth mentioning). No one seems to want to say it, but Moab’s big vistas and open pavement are ideal for ... road biking.

It’s like that scenario with that girl you’ve been trying to date: she’s so gorgeous that you failed to notice that she’s also smart. Likewise, Moab’s dirt is so tantalizing that it’s easy to overlook the roads. Open your eyes, dude! She’s slipping through your fingers.

With that bit of advice in mind, we give you the three best road rides (and best spots to fuel up) in Moab.

### THE RIDES

#### DEAD HORSE POINT // 46-mile out-and-back

[utah.com/stateparks/dead\\_horse.htm](http://utah.com/stateparks/dead_horse.htm)

Remember when Thelma and Louise launched their T-Bird off the cliff? The scene was filmed at Dead Horse Point, a promontory of stone surrounded by steep sandstone cliffs. Utah’s most spectacular state park was once a natural corral used by cowboys driving the wild mustangs that roamed the nearby mesas. Legend says that a group of horses died of thirst there, unable to find their way off the point. Ironically, the Colorado River rages 2,000 feet below.

Start in the parking lot at the intersection of Hwy 191 and SR 313. From there, you’ll gain a gradual 1,700 feet on a well-maintained road with a generous bike lane and virtually no car traffic. At the top, stop and pay a small fee to continue on to the overlook. The infinite view of precipitous bluffs and towering spires is worth it. The visitor’s center is also located within the fee gate, a good place to refill the water and defill the bladder.

#### ARCHES NATIONAL PARK // 47-mile out-and-back

[nps.gov/arch](http://nps.gov/arch)

There’s nothing like riding your road bike against a backdrop that appears straight out of Mars. Arches National Park preserves over 2,000 natural sandstone arches, as well as many other unusual rock formations. The extraordinary features of the park create a landscape of contrasting colors, landforms and textures that is unlike any other in the world.

Ride 5 miles north from Moab or drive your car to the start—the Arches parking lot on Hwy 191. (You’ll pay an entrance fee either way.) Pick up a guide brochure at the fee gate. The scenic park highway is 18 miles long with a few off-shoot loops that will give you a total of 47 miles start-to-finish. Steep switchbacks at the beginning give way to rollers, but the ride is, for the most part, a climb. If you’re into the scenery, some arches are visible from the road, but they are best viewed from the short walking trails. Consider bringing your cleat covers and hoofing it to see the famous Delicate Arch.

#### LA SAL MOUNTAIN LOOP // 56-mile loop

[go-utah.com/La-Sal-Mountains](http://go-utah.com/La-Sal-Mountains)

This route rises from the sculptured canyons of the mighty Colorado River into the majestic 12,271-foot La Sal Mountains outside of Moab. Utah’s second highest mountain range contains six peaks over 12,000 feet. Covered in thick fir and aspen forests and dotted with mountain lakes, the La Sals make for a cool oasis in the heat of summer.

Start the ride in Moab at the adobe Rim Village condos on Spanish Valley Drive (not a bad place to stay with two-car garages and a hot tub). Head south, gradually climbing through Spanish Valley. Once you notice that the elevation is really gaining, you’ve hit “The Big Nasty,” a 3,000-foot climb in 7 miles. Despite the name, The Big Nasty isn’t all bad; this climb has three main parts offering the rider short breaks in between.

Once you’re up in the mountains, the ride becomes more of a scenic cruise. Then it’s a screaming descent to the canyon below. The route winds down with rollers along the Colorado River before concluding in town. Conveniently, you’ll ride passed Milt’s Stop & Eat, a Moabite fave. Stop for a milkshake; you’ll need it.

### EATS

The undisputed place to meet for breakfast is the **Jailhouse Café** at 101 N Main Street. Think ginger pancakes with apple butter. Jailhouse Café only serves breakfast, so don’t miss your chance. Speaking of cafés, who can resist the **Love**



Those tires look awfully thin.



Putting miles on in Castle Valley.

PHOTOS: WENDY DUJST

**Muffin Café?** Located one block down from Jailhouse at 139 N. Main, expect concoctions like the CBC muffin—chocolate, butterscotch and coconut. We recommend this local organic café for lunch; the salads and sandwiches are unreal. For dinner, it would be crime to visit Moab and not eat at **Eddie McStiff’s Microbrewery & Restaurant**. Located at 57 S. Main Street, the entire plaza is named after this Moab institution. Hit McStiff’s post-ride or for dinner. You’ll find an eclectic mix of reasonably priced pub and hoity-toity fare served in an unpretentious atmosphere. Can’t decide which of McStiff’s microbrews to throw back? Consider starting with 75-cent samplers. Or take our word for it and go with the blueberry wheat.

For those in-between times, grab some groceries at **Moonflower Natural Market**, located one block off the main drag at 39 E 100 N Street. This nonprofit natural food store offers organic produce, healthy foods and supplements. For coffee or a place to chill, head to **Arches Book Company** at 78 N. Main. With an inviting atmosphere of plush chairs and new and used books, this independent bookstore makes you feel like a loca. There’s also a laptop bar along the front window for a quickie with your Mac. A full-service Espresso bar featuring Fiery Furnace Roasting Company beans that are roasted on site keeps you caffeinated.

### MOAB DO’S & DON’T’S

**DO** fight the urge to purchase a “Not too Tough for the Muff” T-shirt at Love Muffin Café.

**DON’T** piss off guys in jeeps.

**DO** mind the weather. Unless you’re looking to get scorched, spring and fall are your best options.

**DON’T** assume it’s going to be hot. We’ve seen the weather change in the time it takes to change a tire.

**DO** bring your tools. The local bike shops are fantastic, but they’re also slammed with “tourist” issues.