

Our Nude Camping Trip to Visit Ancient Petroglyphs

By Peter Connolly

"We cannot adequately appreciate this aspect of nature if we approach it with any taint of human pretense. It will elude us if we allow artifacts like clothing to intervene between ourselves and this Other. ... To apprehend it, we cannot be naked enough. ... In wildness is the preservation of the world." - Henry David Thoreau, Walking

Thoreau reminds us of this simple yet important pleasure. This was our experience on Saturday of our 3 day desert campout, as we walked, without clothes, 6 miles across the desert in the Rodman Mountains Wilderness area. Ostensibly our goal was to locate more ancient Petroglyph sites further from our camp. But in reality the best reward was the au-natural hike itself.

So where are we, and what does it take to get here? The Petroglyph viewing and desert outing is organized as a 3 day campout to a remote part of the Mojave Desert. Located about 30 miles beyond the town of Lucerne Valley, our naturist campsite, adjacent to the Rodman Wilderness Area, provides the perfect location for a clothes free weekend, and to walk among Petroglyphs, rock art left by our ancient Indian ancestors. Note that the last 20 miles of the drive to this site are off highway, but this section of graded gravel road is well suited for passenger vehicles.

Although remote, I brought many amenities along for the campers. This year I added an outdoor shower, camp latrine, and a large screen TV for our camping comfort and pleasure. And as last year, we had plenty of stoves, ice, 30 gallons of fresh water, and power for nighttime lights and the all important blender.

Even though the trip officially was to start Friday morning, I along with others were anxious to start our getaway, so I decided to leave Thursday evening. With stops in Burbank to pick up Scott, Pasadena to pick up Gordon, then in Hesperia to meet Keith we finally arrived at our camp site at midnight. Shortly after starting to set up camp, Tim arrived from Orange County.

Friday morning we finished unloading and completed setting-up our camp. Then it was off on our first venture, a walk to the edge of an ancient lava flow 1/2 mile from our camp. It was here that basalt and black lava rock provide the ideal palate for ancient Indians to create their rock art. After exploring this area we returned to camp, as we were expecting other naturists to arrive soon.

Early Friday afternoon Jim and Sandra arrived then Oscar shortly after. After the newest arrivals set up their camps, a toast of ice-cold Champagne was shared. I next was anxious to try my son's newest toy, a drone with a GoPro. For me this proved to be tricky to fly. With some moderately successful flights, and a few crashes, I was able to get a good aerial photo of our camp.

Late Friday afternoon the entire group went on another free-hike, exploring a different area of the desert. Returning to camp we prepared for a fantastic potluck dinner and some relaxing.

With dinner finished, and nighttime on us I played the movie "Talking Stone" on the large screen TV. This 55 minute documentary explores the origins and meaning behind the Petroglyph rock art.

Saturday morning I prepared a pancake, sausage, and fresh fruit breakfast for the group. Not wanting to delay our naturist hike across the desert, and our search for more Petroglyph sites, I urged the group to leave all the dirty dishes from breakfast. I assured everyone it was no problem, and that I would clean up later. With that we all grabbed our packs with water, sunscreen, and cameras for what was to turn out to be a 6 mile hike.

In addition to more petroglyphs, we encountered multiple ancient encampment areas, each surrounded by a protective fence. In these areas one can make out rock circles. These formations most likely formed the base of a wickiup, a structure somewhat similar to a teepee but made with vegetation material as opposed to animal skins which were used in teepee construction.

As we were on our way back but still a mile away from our camp (our site was discreetly selected out of view over a small hill) we saw 3 vehicles pull up and park near the Petroglyph site nearest the road. Most of us changed our hiking route slightly to stay a couple hundred yards or so away as we passed, also being somewhat obscured with the desert vegetation. Keith on the other hand felt, perhaps rightfully so, that we were not doing anything wrong or to be ashamed of, so he continued on and passed right next to the vehicles, with all the friends and families still inside. Remember it is perhaps 15 miles or more they have driven since seeing other vehicles. I would love to have seen their reaction as this naked man comes walking out from an expanse of open desert right by them and continues on into seemingly uninhabited open desert in the other direction.

Upon returning to camp I can see that not cleaning up before leaving was a BAD idea. The entire camp kitchen area was infested with hundreds of "meat bees," or more correctly, yellow jacket wasps. Fortunately, they were not aggressive to us, but they did aggressively go after any exposed water or food. I was able to accomplish some minimal cleanup, but they continued their relentless pursuit of any source of moisture or food.

Late Saturday afternoon 5 of us continued our free-hiking by climbing two 400' hills adjacent to our camp. It was on this hike that we saw our first rattlesnake. Fortunately, the snake warned me just as I entered "the striking zone," allowing me the option of backing safely away. Reaching the summit of these hills rewarded us with great desert vistas.

By nightfall the yellow jackets had completely disappeared allowing me to have my camp kitchen back. This was welcome as I cooked a Cinco De Mayo-themed dinner with soft tacos and strawberry margaritas! While relaxing over dinner I was able to

collect the photos everyone took and play a slideshow on the large screen TV. Also viewed for the first time were the GoPro videos from the drone, the "pilot" needs more practice!

Sunday morning I cooked scrambled eggs, bacon with toast, and fruit. Thanks to Sandy for your help! Keith and Gordon took time to go for a hike and explore a nearby ancient cinder cone and a mining operation there. With plenty of time Sunday morning for breakfast, cleanup, and camp teardown we were in no special hurry, especially since the yellow jackets do not show up until the afternoon, or so I thought.

Before finishing breakfast just a few yellow jackets showed up, much earlier than the previous day, apparently the word got out in the wasp world. It was a race to get everything completely cleaned up and dried off before the swarm. Being a nudist in the middle of 100s of hungry and thirsty yellow jackets perhaps is not smart, I did suffer one sting while cleaning up. Soon Keith and Gordon returned from their excursion, and by late morning, thanks to everyone's help, all was cleaned up and packed away for the drive home.

Again I want to thank everyone that came on this outing, and for all your help. I am already looking forward to many more naturist trips, but what makes it most enjoyable is meeting all the other great naturists!

For more information on this or future trips email NaturistAdventures@yahoo.com



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