

Cranking Along the Kokopelli

All photos courtesy of Bikerpelli



Three days of fun, sun and endless singletrack

By Rebecca Heaton

As a longtime mountain biker, I've fit in my share of stellar single-day rides over the years. I decided it was time to mix up the repertoire and take on something different, something big. I'd heard from numerous friends of multi-day off-road rides they'd done that involved a bit more planning than your standard day trip—such things as setting up

Views along the Kokopelli were endless, from sandstone formations (above and left) to rainbows in Fisher Valley (bottom left) to spectacular canyons and valleys (bottom right).

a sag wagon, getting camping permits, planning meals and, oh yes, putting in big miles multiple days in a row. I was intrigued. Then I heard about Bikerpelli.

This three-day supported adventure travels along the famed Kokopelli Trail, which starts in Fruita at the western border of Colorado and runs 142 miles along singletrack and jeep trail to the mountain bike Mecca of Moab, Utah. The event is the brainchild of Alex Hearn, an avid mountain biker who rode the Kokopelli with friends several years back and decided that it was such a cool trip, that he wanted to make it a big event that others could experience, too.

Our group included 60 riders representing multiple states—



Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Ohio, California, Utah and Colorado. Several were return riders from the previous year, but most were first-timers—my husband and me included—wide-eyed and eager to take on the unknown. Per Hearn's strong recommendation, we'd all been training hard over the past few months to prepare for three days of 50-plus miles each. While finishing the trail in that timeframe seemed a bit daunting, Hearn assured that three days of riding is actually easier than four (or more) because by the end of day three, you'll be more than ready to be off the bike. He was right.

Each day started with a hearty breakfast (except Day 1) and a pre-ride meeting where we'd discuss the trail and conditions to come. Then we were off to pedal on our own for several hours to a mid-point sag wagon for lunch. For those looking to experience maximum scenery and singletrack, Hearn offered up options for additional loops each day. For less hardier types—or those looking to preserve a bit of energy—Hearn arranged shuttle options on Days 2 and 3 to bypass some longer, less-scenic climbs. Our days ended at a pre-arranged campsite where Hearn and his crew awaited us with beer and plenty of tasty eats.

While I could go on and on about the amazing riding—the trail wound through spectacularly scenic, remote desert sandstone and shale canyons, with sections of super-fun and technical singletrack, as well as winding doubletrack and comfortable cruisers—one of the memorable parts of the trip were the beautiful, remote places where we camped. On Day 1, we set up tents along the edge of a spectacular canyon rim with views for miles. Day 2, our site was nestled in a stunning spot called Fisher Valley, which was surrounded by walls of majestic red sandstone. Our final night was spent in a commercial campground in Moab where the hot showers, swimming pool and hot tub more than made up for our having to return to civilization.

Numerous tour companies offer Kokopelli trips several months out of the year that will last anywhere from four to six days. If you're looking for a more manageable and mellow mountain bike experience, this might be the way to go. But if you're prepared to put in some bigger miles and not be as pampered, sign up for Bikerpelli. The trip runs in early May with two weekend options. Sign-up for 2007 will start just after the New Year—keep in mind that this year's trip filled up in just a few hours. For more on Bikerpelli and to get on the 2007 email sign-up alert, stop by www.bikerpelli.com. ○



Massage therapists kept riders going with end-of-the day muscle rubs.