



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2022.09.22
Canyonlands NP, The Needles District



On my way to the Grand Canyon, there were a couple of stops to make. The first was the southern region of Canyonlands NP: the Needles District (CNP-ND). I had been here before, but I figured I could use some fresh photos. Plus, where better to pass a little time than at a National Park?

Truth to tell, I enjoyed the ride to the park more than the park itself. UT-211, a 90-degree right turn off of US-191S about an hour south of Moab, is a delightfully scenic road. It's another half-hour of two-lane cruising through a sedimentary plain with steep red mesa towering on both sides. It is freaking awesome. Yes, another of my favorite roads. It goes on and on until it finally emerges to the more open area of The Needles. I was very much looking forward to the ride.



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But, on this day, there was trouble in paradise. Storms and the flash floods that they spawned had recently rendered

much of UT-211 impassable. Access to CNP-ND was only possible by taking one long-ass detour. I had to stay on US-191 as far as Monticello, then bang a right onto the old and bumpy pavement of CR-136. It was pretty scenic in its own right, with a great long-range vista of CNP-ND (bottom photo, page 1) and it did rejoin UT-211 just as the best scenery was beginning, but it added about 40 minutes to a 90-minute ride.











The last five pages of photos are all from UT-211. We have not even gotten to Canyonlands yet. What a road!

The landscape of The Needles District is remarkable, with distinctive rock formations, but they lack the Wow Factor of other parks. (And that entrance road is a very tough act to follow).

Even the eponymous Needles (top photo, page 1, is a pretty strong zoom) themselves are far from the park's main road, and they can only be toured up close in a 4WD vehicle or on foot as part of a lengthy, hot, unshaded, desert hike. Neither of which happened by me last time, nor would they this time. Someday, when I get younger, I'll have to take that hike. I'd like to walk among that garden of tall, vertical slabs. It does not qualify as a Bucket List item, but it'd be kinda cool, I think.

This visit was an encore lookaround. As such, it lacked the "Oooh, that's interesting" moments of the first time. But it was all good; if I didn't like it enough, I would not have taken that long detour to come and see it all again. And I'm sure I'll be back sometime, if only to drive 211.











And here you see how the Needles formed. Blame salt. And that top photo is as close as you get without the 4WD or the long, hot hike.

I didn't stay at CNP-ND very long. There was another goal for this afternoon. I'd have to retrace the detour on my way back out, but at least I'd be heading in the right direction (i.e., south) this time.