

## Title:

Didn't Mean to Beat a Dead Horse - a Startling Look at the Crust of the Earth

## Word Count:

970

## Summary:

Adventure, surprise and a startling look at the crust of planet earth, await the explorers as they race across the desert outside of Moab, Utah in a search for Dead Horse Point.

## Keywords:

Dead Horse Point, Moab, Utah, La Sal Mountains, motels, hotels

## Article Body:

"Ewww..., ick, who would drink a Dead Horse beer anyway?" our guest turned her nose up and eyed me with suspicion. Her skepticism caught me, and I had to laugh. I really hadn't thought much about it as the Dead Horse Ale from the Moab Brewery provided the right taste for the moment and I had enjoyed that taste for a couple of years now.

I didn't want to belabor the discussion, beating a dead horse about brews, as major world political issues had to be resolved within a matter of hours, over plates of steaming spaghetti back up a mountain canyon on a cold Montana winter evening. Still, our little extended family gathered around the table had to know that the host didn't just have a twisted outlook and a penchant for brew from dead horses. I hate to leave that impression.

Finding this label and ale flavor on the shelves in Missoula, Montana had evoked memories from the murky distant past of a Christmas jaunt in the Moab, Utah area years ago. We had no idea where we were headed as we left Moab that Utah winter morning after Christmas. My wife, brother, my parents and I followed my older brother and his family as they sped away in their car, heading north of Moab up the canyon, and headed off on a bumpy back road to the west.

We drove, and we drove, out there into the middle of this dry, dusty desert country. To our delight, there were marvels as we rounded turns driving up the draws on our race across the desert. passing a small canyon above the road we could see the upper canyon wall, a sheer arched out red rock face carved and sculpted by wind and water over the centuries. At another point we stopped to take a walk/climb across a massive, carved, rounded, rock face stretching up and

back to almost form a small mountain of red rock on the desert landscape.

Then the desert flattened out and we raced along, heading west on a run that seemed to go on for hundreds of miles to somewhere on the distant horizon. Then a turn to the south and the run continued this day after Christmas. We speculated that older brother had it with family over the holiday and was leading us out to lose us in the middle of nowhere.

Surprise and astonishment - the two-car caravan came to an abrupt halt at a rail, people piled out of cars, and the incredible vista suddenly opened out before and below us. Surprise and astonishment barely encompassed our reactions as we stood out on Dead Horse Point. A straight down drop-off lie at our feet, with the Colorado River winding through the Canyonlands National Park 2000 feet below us. The view out here "in the middle of nowhere" was unbelievable, stretching out in a 270 degree panorama before us.

Thousands of years of winds, the mighty Colorado River and countless other streams and rivers had carved a landscape beyond parallel. Red cliff peninsulas and islands, and deep canyons led off in all directions. The surface of planet Earth in a place like this is truly a wonder. It takes a moment like this, a panoramic view out across the landscape with hundreds of square miles of extreme and varied terrain to really bring it all home.

We stood on a level plain that ran behind us to the horizon. In front of us the level plain had been carved 2000 feet down into canyons, crevices, streambeds and river beds. To the east, the other side of Moab, rising from the canyons and crevices, the La Sal Mountains rose above the plain we stood on. This particular day they stood tall and shined, blanketed with a fresh winter snowfall on the forested ridges and peaks "up there". The contrasting layers of the earth's crust were on graphic display.

The smallness of our existence in the Cosmic Order or on a planetary scale immediately comes to mind as we drink in the Dead Horse Point of view. The little band of extended family huddled against the chill winter winds of that high desert region - three generations from Mom and Pop to we three brothers and wives, to the children of our older brother. The 70 year span of our existences was a speck in the massive timescale that was laid out before us, carving down through the crust of the planet.

Maybe the Cosmic Forces didn't create mankind as a vehicle for recognizing and reveling in the wonders that abound on this planet. But we do it so well. We are wired to be awestruck, to stand in amazement at the phenomena that stretches out before us. And, we take with us those panoramic perspectives, those moments

with family, and memories of multi-layers of the earth's crust. They may help us shape the future directions that we go in forming the world we have some control over. Well, some of us anyway.

Then, years later when the option of having a Dead Horse Ale is questioned, the whole scope of that experience comes flooding back. It prompts another recounting of that fascinating experience out on the backroads of Utah. The broad sweeping wonders like that abound throughout the backroad country of Utah, southwestern Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. There are also some great places to stay, dynamite motels and hotels that put you right in the middle of those wonders along those routes, making exploration of the desert southwest a truly spectacular experience. More about that and an introductory guide to the adventures of the southwest can be found in the Utah-Montana Wilderness Tours component at the address: [www.montanaadventure.com/out/state/us-ut.html](http://www.montanaadventure.com/out/state/us-ut.html). Savor the adventure of the desert southwest!