

Flies In Your Teeth
Motorcycling Guides

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**THIRTY GREAT
PLACES TO SEE ON
A MOTORCYCLE
ROAD TRIP
IN AMERICA**

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Introduction

People often ask what are the best places I saw during my 21,475 mile ride around the USA. That is a difficult question to answer, as there were so many. I therefore decided to list out those that I enjoyed the most and in so doing, created this guide.

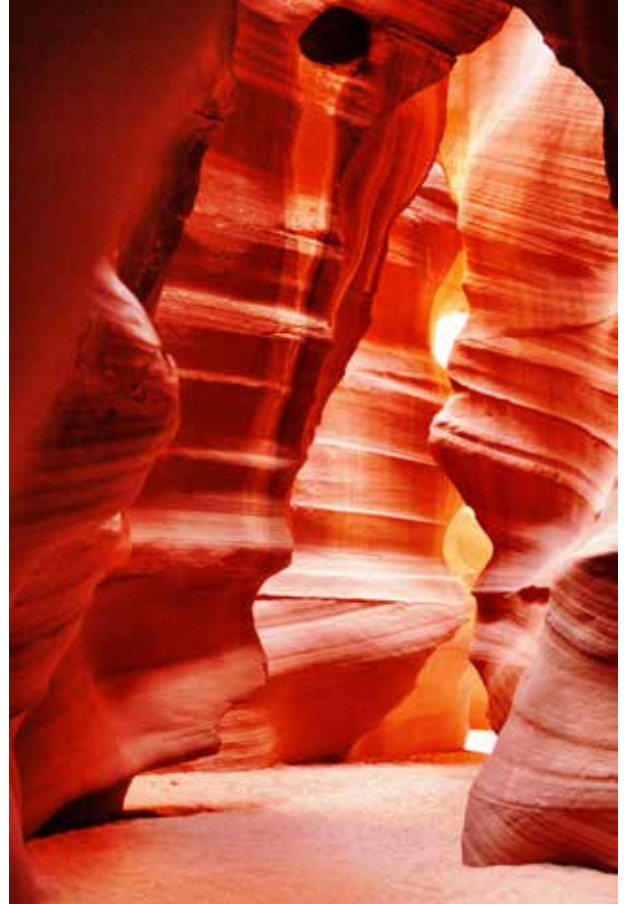
With apologies to the places I did not see and therefore could not write about, I present my top thirty great places to go on a motorcycle road trip in America.

Many of these places are featured in my book 'France In America', about touring the USA by motorcycle.

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It is difficult to choose, but here is my list of the highlights of my US tour, sorted by state....

1. Antelope Canyon, near Page, Arizona.



Antelope Canyon is a slot in the rock, formed by floodwater flowing through its curved corridor-like space. During heavy rains, the water contains sand, and it is this added element that, as the water rushes through the narrow slot, carves the surfaces of the canyon into the smooth shapes that make it so unique. Often just wide enough to walk through, in certain places the canyon is open to the sky above, letting dramatic shafts of sunlight through. The best way to see the canyon is on one of the tours that leave from the middle of Page.

2. The Grand Canyon, Arizona.



One of the most spectacular sights in the world is looking over the edge of the rim of the Grand Canyon. Often written about and photographed, it isn't until you see it with your own eyes that you truly appreciate the colossal size of this natural wonder. If you can, stay in one of the hotels located within Grand Canyon Village at the south rim, but make your reservation way in advance as these get fully booked early.

3. Monument Valley, on the Arizona / Utah border.



There is something mystical about Monument Valley. Shaped by centuries of water erosion, most of the land has been washed away to leave

tall sandstone buttes to rise majestically into the wide open skies. No wonder the Navajo Indians believe this to be a spiritual place. Hotels are scarce around here, so book yours early or expect to stay some distance away. Take one of the tours of the Valley that leave from the car park of the View Hotel, situated within the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park.

4. Death Valley, California.



Hot, surreal and desolate, Death Valley is a stunning natural phenomena. Surrounded on all sides by mountains and with its very low altitude, hot air is trapped in the Valley and as a consequence, some of the hottest temperatures on the planet are seen here. It is easy to miss some of the best parts of Death Valley as almost everyone that drives through the Valley stops and looks at the salt at Badwater Basin, but many miss the spectacular colours of Artist's Drive, the curious salt mounds at Devil's Golf Course, the great views overlooking the Valley from Dante's View, and the wonderful banded rocks at Zabriskie Point. Take plenty of water, especially when riding a motorcycle.

5. San Diego, California.



San Diego has a lot to offer anyone that ventures right to the southernmost parts of the Californian coast. Great beaches, museums, the historical Gaslamp Quarter, ships, wonderful hotels and sports can all be found in this terrific city. Just inland are some great biking roads but also be sure to cross the bridge over the San Diego Bay to the island where the Coronado area is located. This part of San Diego is where the affluent live and it contains one of the most famous hotels in America, the Hotel del Coronado, known locally as just 'The Del'.

6. San Francisco, California.



If you plan to spend time in one of the two major cities on the California coast, skip Los Angeles and head instead for San Francisco. Full

of wonderful places to see and great people to meet, San Francisco has so much more to offer visitors than LA. Of course, you will want to see the world-famous Golden Gate Bridge and almost every tourists favourite – the seals of Pier 39 at Fisherman's Wharf. Some catch a boat out to see Alcatraz Prison and many venture into Chinatown and ride the trolley buses up and down the city's steep hills. Other less well known treasures abound, such as Haight-Ashbury where the hippy movement was said to be formed, or the circular Coit Tower, which has great views from its top. Alamo Square, with the beautiful symmetry of its houses, is also hard to resist.

7. Yosemite National Park, California.



Both times I have been to Yosemite on a motorcycle I have used the same great roads to get there. US 395 is a mainly straight road as it heads north, but as it runs alongside the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the views are spectacular. Then, heading west on Tioga Pass (California State Road 120) the road is simply wonderful on a motorcycle. Twisty and with great views, it is not to be missed. Formed during the Ice Age, Yosemite Valley is a great place to see with its many wonderful natural sights, waterfalls, river and spectacular mountains.

8. Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.



Straight roads tend to exist where the land is flat, but due to its mountainous terrain, bikers have no problems finding twisty roads to ride in Colorado. That is due mainly to the Rocky Mountains which dominate the landscape of the state. Covered in snow in the winter, the roads and mountain passes make for great riding in the warmer months. To the west side of the state is the Colorado National Monument, with its dramatic cliffs on the edge of a high plateau. A 23 mile / 37 kilometre long road rises from the park entrance to the top of the plateau and then broadly follows along the cliff edge. Both the ride up and the views down into the valley below are magnificent.

9. The Million Dollar Highway, between Silverton and Ouray, Colorado.



There were a few place names that cropped up time after time when talking to people, especially bikers, about where to go on my trip across the US. The advice I heard time and time again was “You must ride the Million Dollar Highway.” The road (US 550) runs from Silverton to Ouray and there are two conflicting theories as to why the road was given its distinctive name: one is that it cost a million dollars a mile to build in the 1920s; the other is that the rock and gravel used in its construction contained a million dollars-worth of silver and gold ore. Either way, with its steep drop-offs and no guard rails, the road is a treat to ride as it winds its way through this part of the Rocky Mountains.

10. Mount Evans, Pikes Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.



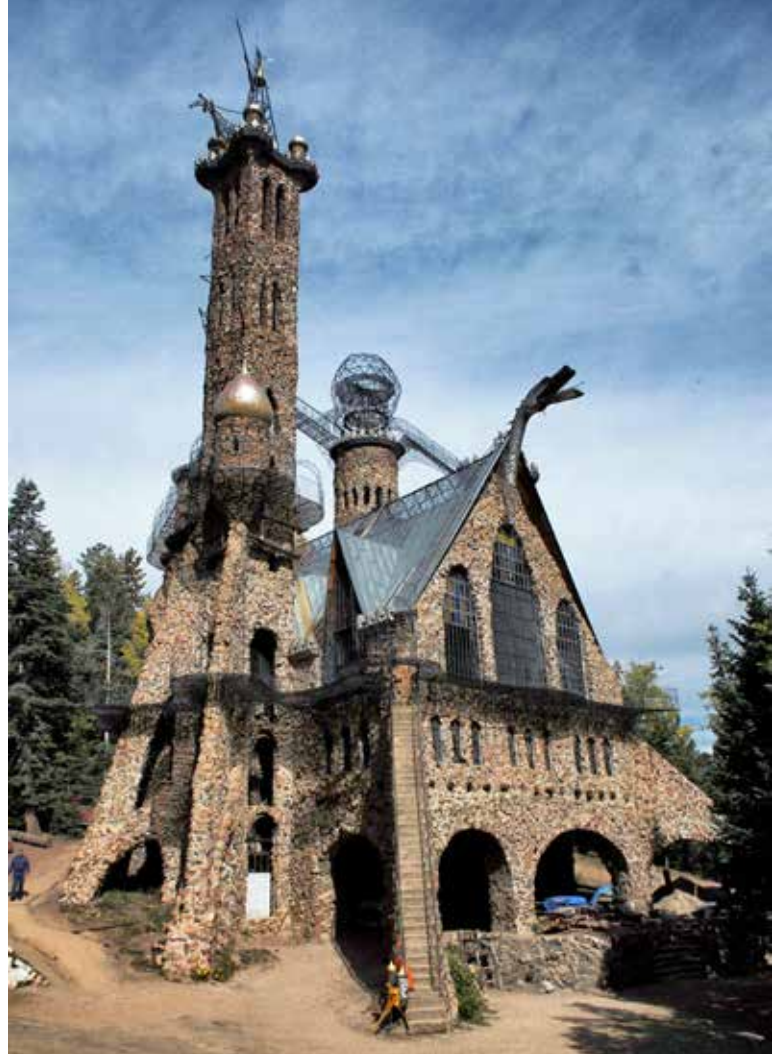
These three great mountain areas attract many motorcyclists to ride their spectacular roads. On the west side of Denver, Mount Evans has the highest paved road in America and the climb up to the summit of the road at 14,130 feet is dramatic. South of Denver is Pikes Peak, which has another great road, rising up to 14,115 feet. The ride up and the views from both of these two mountains are terrific. On the north side of Denver is the much larger Rocky Mountain National Park. This has a series of roads running through it, the most dramatic of which is Trail Ridge Road at the northern end of the park which is simply magnificent. It is the highest continuous road in the US, and it feels like it. At its highest point, the road crests at 12,183 feet as it runs along the top of a ridge – spectacular stuff!

11. Skyline Drive, Canon City, Colorado.



Nowhere near as high, but equally as dramatic, is a short road near Cañon City called Skyline Drive. This one way road runs along the top of a ridge, with steep drop-offs on both sides. It is truly remarkable. Only 2.5 miles long, this road makes no logical sense, as it doesn't lead anywhere that other parallel roads can't take you. The road has a 15 mph speed limit but on a motorcycle, it is difficult to ride it that slowly. At first, it climbs up the side of the slope from its junction with US 50, but it's not long before you reach the top of the ridge, and your eyes dart from side to side. The sensation of riding along the ridge is very strange, especially when cresting its peaks or when there is nothing on either side. Without a doubt, this is the most unusual road I have ever been on – and one of the most exciting.

12. Bishop Castle, near Colorado City, Colorado.



As a fifteen-year-old boy, Jim Bishop bought a piece of land for \$450. In 1969, at the age of twenty five and recently married, Jim set about building a castle and he has continued this monumental task, single-handedly. The main building is 160 feet / 49 metres tall and is mightily impressive. Visitors to the castle are welcome and can leave a donation should they wish, which helps to fund the work. Signing a guestbook means you can explore the building if you want to, but it is not for the faint-hearted. The stairs are steep and the exquisite ironwork structures appear flimsy, so you have to have a degree of faith in Mr Bishop's construction skills as you climb the building. What I love about the place is its sheer quirkiness. The design is wonderful, and its construction methods very unusual. Work continues most weekends and I really hope Jim is able to fully finish his castle one day.

13. Chicago, Illinois.



Quite simply, this is my favourite US city. I love the outspoken nature of the people, who generally tell you things straight-up. I love the modern tall buildings. The waterfront area facing Lake Michigan was a true vision by the city planners that is to be admired, and the above-ground railway is effective and simple to use. There is plenty to see and do in Chicago, with many cultural, art and music events put on for its residents and visitors alike. I love the sculpture in Millennium Park called 'The Bean'. But, I don't like the traffic. I don't like the biting wind that races across the lake. I only like its snow for about 2 hours. I like being in Chicago in summer!

14. Provincetown in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.



Located right at the end of the Cape Cod Peninsular, Provincetown (or P-town as it is known by many) is laid-back, welcoming and colourful. You get to the peninsular by crossing the 135 foot high Sagamore Bridge, but don't stay on the rather dull main US 6 highway for long, but travel on the smaller roads on the west side of the peninsular instead. Cross to the east side near South Wellfleet and check out the popular Beachcomer bar, perched atop some impressive looking, steep sand dunes. P-town has a reputation for being the gay capital of New England and that is borne out by being in the centre of town on a Saturday evening, when the place comes alive with people obviously proud of their sexuality. It is a blast to be there! Be sure to check out the fantastic beaches at the very tip of the peninsular.

15. Beartooth Pass, on the Montana / Wyoming border.



Famous in American biking circles, Beartooth Pass almost has legendary status in the USA. Also known as the Beartooth Highway, the road is the section of U.S. Highway 212 between Red Lodge, Montana and Cooke City, Montana. Cresting at 10,947 feet, the road is often snow-covered and is open only in the warmer months, generally May to October. People sometimes say they "feel on top of the world" and on Beartooth Pass, that feeling is more real as you look down on other mountains. It is a good riding road, with spectacular views.

16. Bighorn Canyon, on the Montana / Wyoming border.



Possibly one of America's best kept secrets, the Bighorn Canyon is a natural US marvel that most people have never heard of. Having anticipated something much smaller, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing when I eventually found this isolated wonder. The only person there when I visited, I simply hadn't expected this glorious deep canyon, with a broad river at its base. The sheer cliffs tower more than 1,000 feet above the waters which are held back by the Yellowtail Dam, forming Bighorn Lake. Prior to the existence of the dam, the river cut deeply into the soft rock and formed the canyon. Boating and fishing are the main leisure pursuits on the lake and river. If visiting, taking a boat trip along the river beneath the impressive canyon walls.

17. The Sand Hills, in Nebraska.



Highway 2 cuts through a large part of the state of Nebraska. Many people told me I would find the riding through the state boring as there are few towns and generally flat scenery. I wanted to see it anyway and I was very glad I did. When leaving Grand Island the next outpost of society of any reasonable size is 327 miles later when you reach Chadron. On the way, there is not much to see, but the isolation is wonderful, especially on a motorcycle. You are almost alone with just the occasional car or train for company and if ever you wanted a place to clear your head, this is it. The Sand Hills are found along a good deal of this road and are literally that – hills made of sand. The sun is intense here in the summer, so any water soon evaporates from the sandy soil, and the semi-arid climate brings little rain. Take lots of water!

18. Lobsters in the New England states.



The state of Maine has a fabulous coastline. With mainly rocky shores protected by many lighthouses, the state has just the right water temperature and underwater rock areas that allow lobsters to flourish. Back in the 1800s, lobsters were so plentiful that they were regarded as junk food. Simply picked off the rocks or from the tidal pools, the lobsters were so common, they were fed to prisoners, children and servants and at one time there were so many lobsters, they were even chopped up and used as fertiliser on the fields and gardens. Today, the lobster industry thrives along the New England coast, with small boats using traps sitting on the bottom of the ocean. Riding the coastline roads in Maine takes time, but is very rewarding.

19. Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, New York City, New York.



Many people would avoid riding in big cities on a road trip in America, but for this Londoner, it seemed an obvious place to take my motorcycle. Yes, the traffic is bad and the driving standards poor, but you get to see such iconic sights! Riding past the Empire State Building, through Times Square, or in Central Park all give a buzz like no other place. Even sitting in traffic next to yellow taxis made me grin. However, one of the best places for me was the peaceful location of the tiny Empire-Fulton Ferry Park, wedged between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges. The view from there across the East River towards Manhattan, is pretty special.

20. Niagara Falls. New York.



Niagara Falls comprises two major parts – the American Falls and the Horseshoe Falls. The border between the US and Canada runs along the middle of the Niagara River, with the American

Falls sitting within the US, and the Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side. The views of the falls are best from the Canadian side of the River, so that is where visitors should head, normally crossing over the border on the Rainbow Bridge – don't forget your passport. The boats that take visitors to the base of the falls are called 'Maid of the Mist' and leave from both sides of the river. There are many other attractions and if possible, try to also see the falls at night when there are occasional spectacular light shows.

21. The Badlands, South Dakota.



Being located so close to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, the Badlands National Park has a good reputation amongst bikers, many of whom who throng to this part of South Dakota in August each year. As you ride through the parks remarkable landscape, it is easy to see why. If ever you wanted to think you could be riding on another planet, the Badlands would be a good contender. Shaped by thousands of years of rain, the park features water-eroded buttes, pinnacles, and spires. The road through the park gives excellent views of the peculiar shapes and therefore is terrific to ride.

22. Needles Highway, in the Black Hills of South Dakota.



South Dakota Highway 87 is also known as the Needles Highway. From its junction with US 16-ALT, past beautiful Sylvan Lake to where it meets US 16 near Hill City, the Needles Highway is 19 miles of biking heaven. Located within Custer State Park, the road twists and turns many times, with tunnels blasted through rock outcrops and spectacular views of the tall granite needles it is named after. It is such a great road, I rode it three times on the morning I was there.

23. Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, South Dakota.



Called the “Mother of all motorcycle rallies” Sturgis is one of those events, that if you possibly can, you should go to see at least once. As your journey takes you nearer to Sturgis you see more bikes on the roads: thousands and thousands, in fact. They are all shapes and sizes, but one brand prevails: Harley-Davidson. The riders come in all shapes and sizes too. Sturgis normally has a population of just 6,800 people, and the impact of the bike rally on the town and its environs is enormous, with something in the order of 500,000 people attending each year. Hardly surprising, then, that these vast numbers dictate that the rally has to be spread over a large area, encompassing many other towns: Deadwood, Spearfish and even Rapid City see a lot of action and overspill from the main rally sites. With more than half a million people trying to stay in a town that has a tiny population during the rest of the year, it is easy to imagine how difficult it can be to find a hotel room during the rally, so book way in advance. Needless to say, the hotels, motels and B&Bs hike their room rates and charge some outrageous prices. For this reason, many people stay at one of the camp sites set up especially for the rally, with Buffalo Chip being one of the biggest.

24. Arches, Canyonlands, Bryce and Zion National Parks in Utah.



Southern Utah is a scenic delight for visitors, with many world-class parks in relatively close proximity. Arches National Park is best seen on foot as many of the natural rock arches are some distance away from roads. Canyonlands is in two halves and I recommend visiting the

northern section called the ‘Island in the Sky’, where spectacular views abound. Bryce canyon is stunning as the area comprises a mass of brightly-coloured rock, eroded into vertical columns called hoodoos or spires. Hundreds of these stand next to each other, pointing skyward, which makes for an incredible sight. Zion is remarkable and affords the opportunity to walk along a river bed through a canyon with sheer rock walls towering above you.

25. Moki Dugway, Utah.



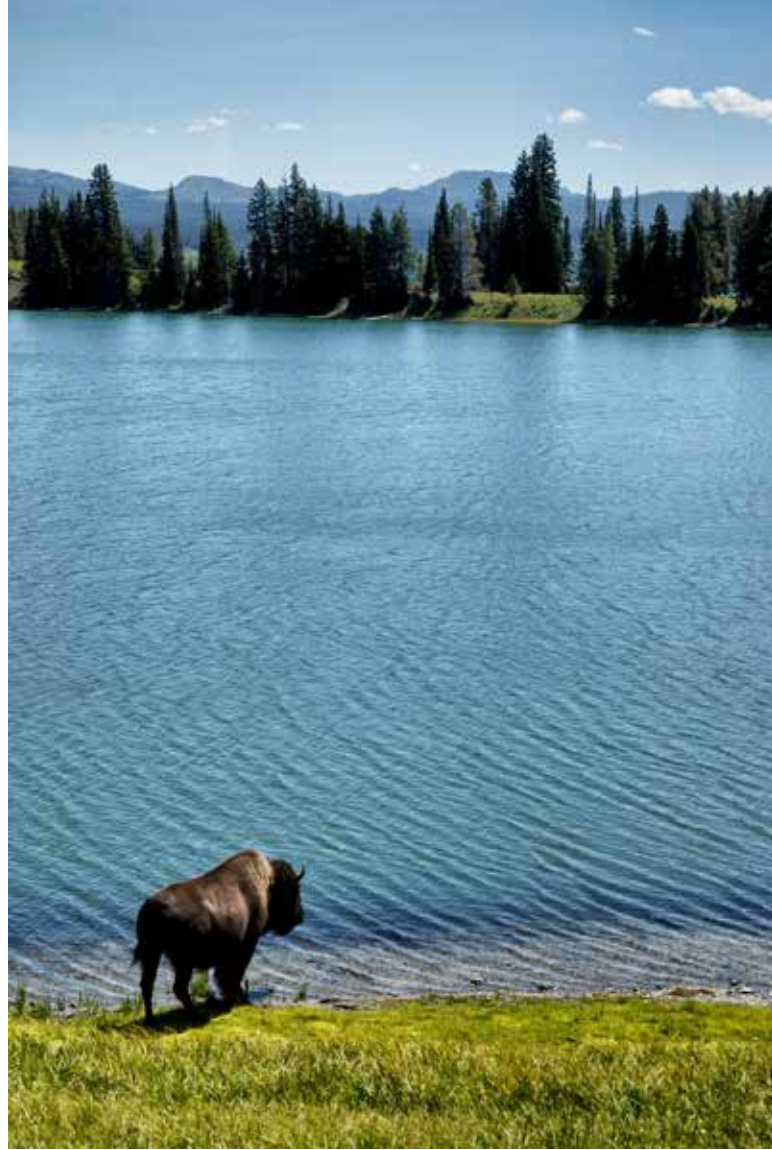
Located just north of Monument Valley, visitors to the area are highly recommended to ride the peculiar road called Moki Dugway. Constructed in 1958 as a mining haul road to transport uranium ore, this gravel road climbs 1,100 feet in just 3 miles. As the road begins to rise, good solid tarmac suddenly gives way to loose gravel, a challenge to ride up on a heavy touring motorcycle. The first section going up is relatively gentle, but it soon becomes steeper, with many hairpin bends. Because of its steep incline, sheer drops and no guardrails, you have to have your wits about you. It is however, a relatively easy ride up, although the surface of the road alters quite dramatically when it is raining hard.

**26. The Harley-Davidson Museum,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**



Opened in July 2008, the Harley-Davidson museum traces the history of the famous American motorcycle from its roots in 1903 to the current day. As well as displaying an extensive range of motorcycles, the museum also contains photographs and artefacts from throughout the history of the brand. The museum is 130,000-square-feet and so not as large as some may expect, but the exhibits are displayed in a very creative way, using great lighting to generate a good atmosphere. An excellent feature is The Engine Room, where past models are displayed and explained. Whether you own a Harley-Davidson or not, any biker will enjoy the museum.

**27. Bison, waterfalls and geysers of
Yellowstone National Park,
mainly in Wyoming.**



Located in the north-west corner of Wyoming, Yellowstone is a place not to be missed. It takes a full day to travel around its loop road and see most of its highlights. An excellent place to see Bison (often incorrectly called Buffalo by many), geysers including the famous Old Faithful, bubbling pools and wonderful views, Yellowstone is a must. Stay nearby and get up early to make the most of your visit.

28. Cody, Wyoming.



The town of Cody is named after William Frederick Cody, otherwise known as Buffalo Bill, who was a hunter, army scout and entertainer. William supplied buffalo meat to railroad workers and, as a result, earned his nickname of Buffalo Bill. Retaining as much of its history as it can, Cody today still retains the feeling of a cowboy town. On the edge of town is the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, containing many original artefacts and memorabilia. Walking into the Irma Hotel, which was built by Buffalo Bill and named after his daughter, is like taking a step back in time. During the summer months, re-enactments of Wild West gunfights take place next to the hotel. Overall, Cody has a good feeling to it. Yes, it has a lot of shops that cater to tourists, but these sell good quality merchandise, not the usual cheap nonsense available at many busier tourist spots.

29. Devils Tower, Wyoming.



When you first see it in the distance, the huge rock formation known as the Devils Tower is a strange sight. It rises 1,267 feet above the surrounding land, and its shape and form lend it a mysterious feeling. No wonder this rock has been revered by native Indians for centuries. The tower was formed about 50 million years ago. Magma in a volcano cone cooled underground and set hard. Millions of years passed and the general ground level was eroded, thus gradually exposing the rocky monolith. In 1977, Devils Tower featured in Steven Spielberg's film 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', where it was the landing point for alien spacecraft. I can certainly understand why the tower was chosen as a location for the film. It has a mystique that fits in with the film's plot perfectly.

30. Tétons mountain range, Wyoming.



The Téton Range runs north-south on the Wyoming side of its border with Idaho. At between six and nine million years old, they are the youngest of the Rocky Mountains and are still rising. Early French voyageurs gave the mountains the name 'Les Trois Tétons' (The Three Breasts), referring to the cluster of peaks. On opposite sides of a fault line, the west side was thrust upwards, forming the mountains, and the east side downwards, creating the valley known as Jackson Hole. One of the best views of the Tétons is in the early morning, across Jenny Lake when the water is still and the first rays of the rising sun are striking the peaks.