



Nevada's Basin and Range Road Trip (N23A)

I had planned on a return visit to Nevada's Basin and Range National Monument on a 2022 road trip, but a leaky radiator caused me to cancel some plans late in that trip. So, I returned there recently for some hiking and rock art, and to visit some of the area's UFO and extraterrestrial-related sites along the famous Extraterrestrial Highway.

Nevada Highway 375 got its nickname as the Extraterrestrial Highway because this remote road is the closest highway to the notorious Area 51, a highly classified Air Force facility in the Nevada Test and Training Range. Some believe that Area 51 is where the ~~UFO~~ weather balloon that crashed near Roswell, New Mexico in 1947 and its alien occupants were brought, and that meetings and joint undertakings with extraterrestrials have been held there. Mysterious lights in the nighttime skies in the area have helped fuel these beliefs. The military, not surprisingly, denies this, but such conspiracy theories probably help the Air Force maintain secrecy over what actually goes on there.

There are few towns and businesses in the area, but they've found that UFOs and aliens are good for business. You're more likely able to buy an alien T-shirt than basic groceries in these parts.



I first drove the Extraterrestrial Highway back in 2000 and posted photos online. That led the Federal Highway Administration to license some of my photos for its page on the Extraterrestrial National Scenic Byway. Alas, the highway has since lost its federal scenic byway status.



Who needs groceries when you can get fresh jerky, seasoned nuts, soft drinks, ice cream and souvenirs at E.T. Fresh Jerky, pretty much the only business in Crystal Springs, Nevada.



A mural on the side of the business



The law in these parts



Some people might say that this explains a lot. But it's just an old-time fortuneteller booth with an updated seer inside.



I stopped at the scene of this accident. Fortunately, all the occupants were okay, and they had already called Triple U, the Universal UFO Union, for planetside assistance. So, I continued on my way.



Next up was the Alien Research Center near Hiko, Nevada



At the Alien Research Center, you'll find less jerky but more UFO and extraterrestrial-themed T-shirts and souvenirs, as well as items tied to popular movies and TV shows such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *The X-Files*.



The Black Mailbox, pretty much in the middle of nowhere along the Extraterrestrial Highway, is located in an otherwise unmarked parking area at the dirt and gravel road that eventually leads you to the Area 51 gate. It's a popular gathering area for UFO watchers who scan the skies over Area 51 looking for UFOs.



From the Black Mailbox, you can look across the Tikaboo Valley towards the Jumbled Hills range. Area 51 lies beyond those mountains.



Well, what do you know! There's a UFO now! I can only imagine all the intelligence about us that it can gather with that unusually long antenna.

The UFO was heading to the northwest, so I decided to follow it, but it was too fast for me.



I eventually reached Rachel, Nevada, where I decided to stop for lunch at the Little A'Le'Inn.



I had an Alien Burger for lunch, which I hope got its name from a marketing gimmick rather than its meat content. The Little A'Le'Inn also has a bar and operates a small hotel and campground.



I caught up to the UFO, too, which was hovering above the Little A'Le'Inn in the UFO parking area.

Although that was the end of my planned UFO and extraterrestrial sightseeing, some of the rock art panels I would later see in nearby Basin and Range National Monument might make some wonder if extraterrestrials have been visiting the area for centuries. These petroglyphs may date back as much as 1,500 to 4,000 years, and are unique to the region.



Mt. Irish V site Pahrnagat style anthropomorphic (human) figure (left); Narrows II site Basin and Range Tradition anthropomorphic figure (right)

I visited four rock art sites at White River Narrows Archaeological District in Basin and Range National Monument.



Narrows V site



Narrows II site



Narrows III site



Narrows III site



Narrows III site; some believe that the long row of short vertical lines to the left may have been some type of calendar

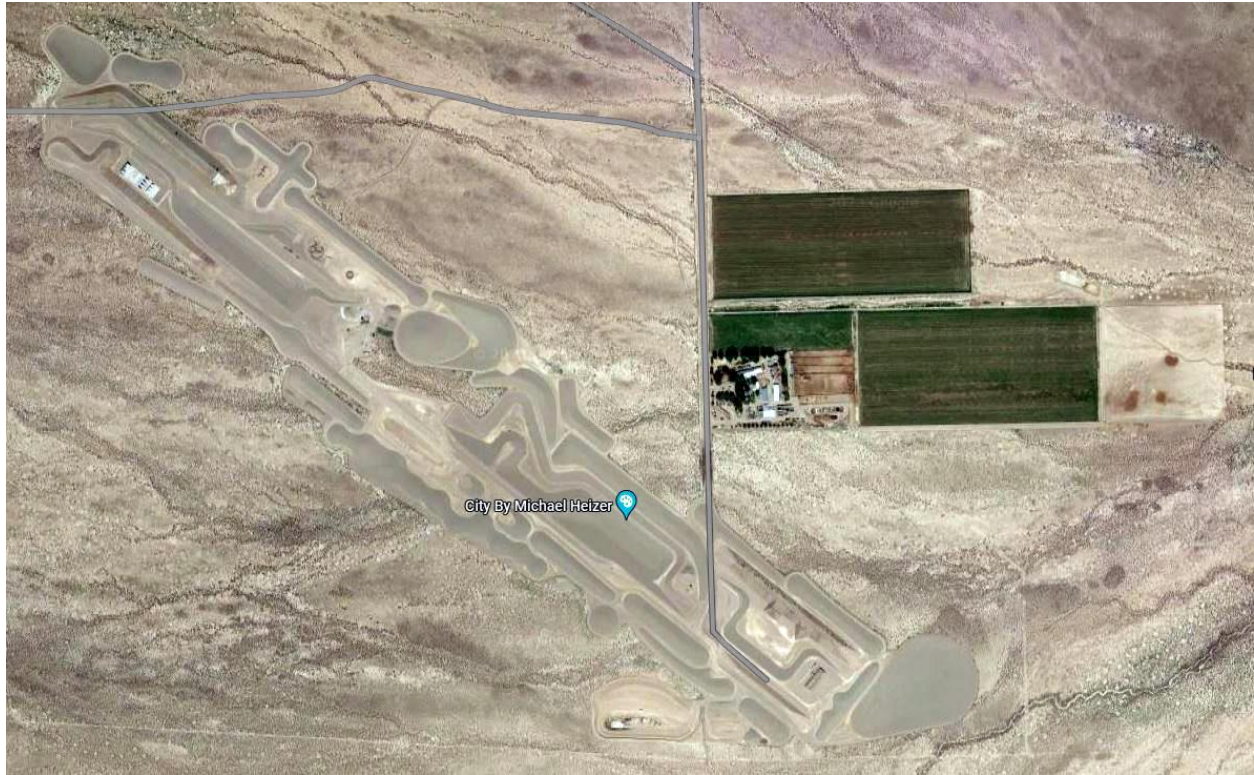
The basin and range area is characterized by north-south-aligned mountain ranges separated by broad valleys. Geologically speaking, this area was stretched apart, creating large blocks of earth that tilted into high mountains and deep valleys. But millions of years of erosion reduced the mountains and filled the valleys, resulting in the landscape we see today. The high Sierra Mountains to the west prevent most Pacific moisture from reaching this area, creating the Basin and Range Desert.



Along Timber Mountain Pass Road in Basin and Range National Monument



Seaman Wash Road in Basin and Range National Monument leads to *City*, a massive land art sculpture created by Michael Heizer that was recently completed after 50 years and \$40 million. It's 1 ¼ miles long and ¼ mile wide, one of the largest sculptures ever created. However, it's on a private enclave in the middle of the monument, barely visible from the road even with zoom, and visitation is limited to just six people/day by reservation at \$150 apiece. Basin and Range National Monument was created in part to protect the landscape surrounding *City*.



City, as seen from Google Satellite



Scenery along Logan Canyon Road in Basin and Range National Monument, which leads to several rock art sites in the Mt. Irish Archaeological District. I checked out rock art at three of those sites.



Mt. Irish IV is one of the largest petroglyph sites in the district, and features more of the Basin and Range Tradition rock art.

I've come across a variety of wildlife in my various travels and hiking, including rattlesnakes, all generally at a safe distance. But rattlers are common in the desert, so it's a good idea to watch where you put your feet – and your hands if you climb and your butt if you sit down.

I was reminded of that as I neared the end of my hike at the Mt. Irish VI site.



This was the first time in all my hiking that I unwittingly got close enough to a rattlesnake that it decided to bare its fangs, rise into strike pose, and shake its rattles at me. It was only about 3-4 feet long, and based on the number of segments in its rattle probably just two years old. So, I bared my fangs right back at it, and it decided to retreat.



Rattlers get a new segment on their rattle every time they shed their skin. Young rattlesnakes generally shed their skin about 3x/year or so, thus my estimate of about two years old.



One look at me, and the rattler decided to retreat



Off it goes. For my hike, I was wearing my medical boots made of leather-covered plastic panels sturdy enough to help support my weight, so I suspect that it would have been in for quite the surprise had it decided to strike my “leg”.

For the last full day of the trip, I headed into southwest Utah for a visit to the colorful Chinle Formation landscape of the Old Paria townsite area. I first visited this canyon in 2000, and I have returned several times since for assorted short and long hikes over the years, including a 10-mile hike on the trip in 2000 where I eventually broke a bone in my foot the first time.







Utah had record snowpack this past winter, but it's long melted, and they had a dry monsoon season, so the Paria River was dry here.

I headed back home the next morning.