Our Scenic Drive along Utah State Road 39

For our first sightseeing adventure in this area, Gary and I didn’t go to Salt Lake City or Great Salt Lake or even the nearby historic town of Ogden (all three of which we hope to see during our stay). Instead, we decided to take a scenic drive along Utah State Road 39. We’ve now logged another 178 miles on the Triumph.

This scenic drive begins in the narrow Ogden Canyon. This cannon is so narrow that signs are posted to discourage cyclists and trailers from traveling the first five miles.

The portion of Utah State Road 39 which parallels the Ogden River is known as the Ogden River Scenic Byway. This byway cuts through this narrow canyon in a series of twists and turns. Getting a picture of the river and the winding road proved impossible on the back of a motorcycle.
After the canyon, the road traverses Ogden Valley where Pineview Dam and Reservoir are located. With the blue waters and the backdrop of Mount Ogden, this proved to be a picturesque lake.

We talked about stopping at the lake but kept driving, because our first planned stop was the small town of Huntsville.

The small town of Huntsville (total area: 0.7 sq miles) and the small communities of Eden and Liberty are collectively called Ogden Valley.

Huntsville once thrived on an economy based on agriculture and dairy farms, but today most residents work outside of town. However, the valley and the painted barns still made for a picturesque place.
We planned a stop in Huntsville, because I read about the Shooting Star Saloon in several places. Being in continuous operation since 1879, the Shooting Star Saloon is the oldest saloon in Utah. Reportedly, it’s “the place” in the area to grab a burger. Gary and I opted not to try their signature Star Burger, which is two ground beef patties and two slices of cheese with a grilled Polish sausage in the middle, and shared a single-patty cheeseburger instead. The burger was tasty and worth the drive.

After the town of Huntsville, Utah State Road 39 enters the Monte Cristo mountains and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. We climbed from 5,000+ feet to 9,000+ feet....
As the elevation changed, we watched in amazement as the vegetation changed from sagebrush fields to forests of cottonwoods and willows and then to forests of Aspens and evergreens. Amazing!
After a summit of 9,000+ feet, the road makes its descent. We saw countless signs to watch for wildlife. The only animals we had to watch for were free-ranging cattle, which were quite a surprise when coming around a turn.
Utah State Route 39 ends in the town of Woodruff, which didn’t offer much to see (so I forgot to take a picture) but it is known as Utah’s North Pole.

Not ready for our scenic ride to be over and realizing that the Utah-Wyoming border was less than thirty miles away, Gary and I decided to continue our ride.
into The Cowboy State.

Welcome to Wyoming!

where we watched horses galloping in a pasture and passed by the largest racetrack in Wyoming, Wyoming Downs.
We drove through the small town of Bear River (total area: 1.9 square miles).

Bear River is not only the largest tributary of Great Salt Lake but also the longest river in North America that doesn’t empty into the ocean.

Side Note: Back at our home on wheels, I researched the small towns we traveled through to learn about its history or its claim to fame. There wasn’t much to learn about Bear River but I did see a chart that showed Bear River is located 85 miles from Salt Lake City. Thinking of miles and because I was curious, I discovered that in Bear River, Wyoming, we were over 1500 miles away from our stick-and-brick house in Collierville, Tennessee.

Next, we came to the town of Evanston (total area: 10.32 sq miles) and drove through its historic downtown. Evanston is an old railroad town founded during the construction of the first transcontinental railroad; it was named for a surveyor for the Union Pacific Railroad. With its abundance of timber and location near the Bear River, Evanston became a refueling station for trains traveling cross-country.

Today, Evanston is known as a little city with a spirit bigger than itself, and known for its 300 days of sunshine a year and clean air.
Our afternoon drive extended into early evening and it was time to get back. For our return trip, GG (our gps named Garmin Girl) wanted to take us back to Ogden via the interstate. When traveling on motorcycle, Gary tries to avoid traveling on the interstate. The best way for us to get back to our home on wheels was for us to go back the way we came.

Gary and I have both commented that we like scenic drives which are loops. But we’ve discovered that we also like to go back the same way we came, because we always see things we missed.

Like the return trip on State Utah Route 39. How did we miss a waterfall in the narrow river canyon?

We might need to go back and get a better look (and better picture)!