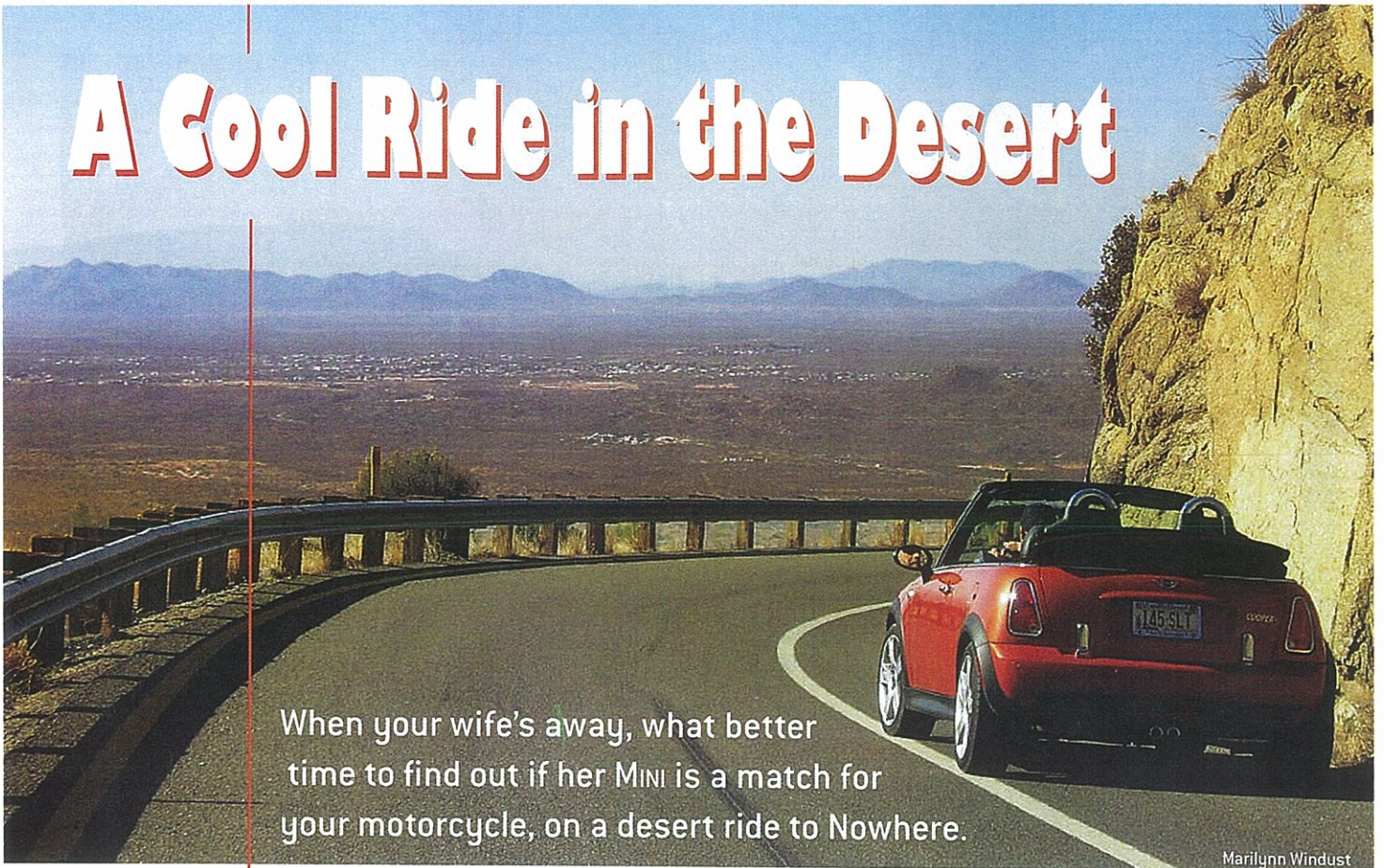


A Cool Ride in the Desert



Marilynn Windust

When your wife's away, what better time to find out if her MINI is a match for your motorcycle, on a desert ride to Nowhere.

by Ron Mitchell

My wife Mare and a friend fly to Cabo San Lucas to enjoy a girl's get away, abandoning her 2005 MINI Cooper S convertible into my care. My initial plan is to enjoy an extended bachelor weekend, tailor-made for piggish passions and bibulous behavior.

But smug in the garage, the convertible Cooper dares me to test its 1.6 liter, 168 hp supercharged inline engine, which lurks under an orange hood with black racing stripes. I am hard on cars. I dent 'em, scratch 'em, and trash 'em and don't want to be the first to dent this one – Mare's dream car and first splurge. My motorcycle is a whole different story – my dream machine that wears spotless black and chrome concealing an Andrew's cam and high flow air intake, which kicks the engine up a notch when I caress the throttle.

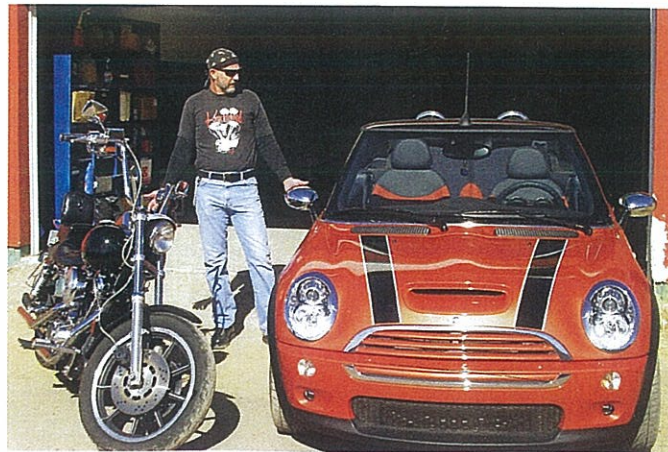
I'm restless and the speedometer on my motorcycle is broken, which makes it impossible to track the exact mileage to the high desert town of Nowhere, Arizona. I need the mileage for my slant on an article I'm writing about the Arrowhead Bar in Nowhere, so I decide to ride that MINI with the ragtop down.

About fifty-two miles west of Nothing, and twenty-three miles south of Nowhere, (Arizona desert towns) the "Arrowhead Bar" abuts scenic route 89 in west central Arizona. It has endured the metamorphoses from a general store/bar in 1790, to house of prostitution, to gas station/bar, and finally the current steakhouse/bar. The homestead shack next to it continues to deteriorate.

I note the mileage as I zip past the Arrowhead Bar in the MINI, on my way to Nowhere, delighted to encounter the base of Yarnell Hill. The "S" curves of Yarnell Hill merit gold and black twenty miles per hour warning signs. I pass everything on the road in front of me like a bee buzzing by their ear, with intimidation turning to exhilaration, similar to an adrenaline motorcycle ride, where cool, dry wind waters your eyes and you smile at death slipping under your foot pegs.

Shoot! This MINI curves better than my motorcycle. I challenge the hairpin curves at forty-five and push seventy on the short, straight uphill stretches. And you know what? The windshield wipes away the bugs from the wind before they splatter on my face, while country music blares, and four wheels support me instead of two! I don't need to wear goggles, leathers, a bandana or boots. A pair of jeans and a baseball cap will suffice, because the bucket seat heater warms my bottom. I wave at a long line of vintage Corvettes winding down the hill on the

Owners' Circle



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