2-3 hour Ride

Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Cottonwood Hills Loop

About the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve: At the merging of three great ecosystems, the Mojave Desert, the Great Basin, and the Colorado Plateau, the reserve is biologically rich with an array of animals and plants rarely seen in one place. The reserve contains the most northern populations of the desert tortoise, Gila monster, sidewinder rattlesnake, and chuckwalla - reptiles typically associated with hotter and more southerly deserts, like the Mojave. A significant portion of the shrubs in this area, such as blackbrush, are more commonly associated with the cooler Great Basin Desert. The conditions in the region are such that several endemic species, those which occur no where else in the world, are found here.

Directions: Take the UT-9 exit from I-15 (Highway 9 goes to Hurricane, Zion Canyon, Grand Canyon) about 15 miles north of St. George. Drive to the traffic light in 0.7 miles. Turn left on Old Highway 91. (Gas station on NE corner) Now go exactly 2 miles north. Watch on your left for a gravel road that enters a tiny single-lane slot under the freeway, with a sign that says **"Cottonwood Trailhead".** It will be between a warehouse Winkel Distributing and a Rocky Mountain Power office. Turn left and drive 0.25 miles under both lanes of the freeway to reach the trailhead. This is a medium size trailhead with parking for 6-8 trailers. There are restrooms but no water.   Ride over the step-over and up the road to the very end where it turns into a single track trail. NOTE: IN THIS AREA OF THE RESERVE, YOU **MUST** REMAIN ON THE TRAIL. The trail winds though the Reserve—be sure to enjoy all the different rock formations. At Spanish wash, go south and then back north on the Prospector's trail. Be on the lookout for a V in the trail—take the right fork to the wash. (It's not well marked) If you ride up to the red rock ledge, go back about 40-50 yds to the V. And please, Leave No Trace at the Trailhead.

Back Country Horsemen of Utah—Southwest Chapter