

The Minimalist Rider – Eric Vaillancourt’s 2008 Utah 1088 experience

Ok, so I bought a GPS..... and after a struggle, got maps loaded into it. (2610 refurb, 2Gb card). Dennis York, (LDRyder) helped me way beyond the call on the loading and prep. Then I read and poked at the plastic box for a few days, and read some more and poked some more. About that time I concluded it was still a plastic box and left it where plastic boxes belong, on my kitchen counter to keep the tupperware company. I left it home on purpose as I just wasn't getting the hang of it and didn't want to find myself looking at the plastic box when I should have been looking at the road.

This meant that I would not be able to do any GPS boni during the 1088. 😊 I believe there were all of THREE of them. My loss.

I also took the Polaroid camera. This was to be it's retirement rally, but since I took only about 5 pictures, I still have 40+ shots left for another rally.

So again, no laptop, no GPS, no radar detector, no digital camera, no aux. lights or any of that other stuff some folks love. I do ride with a fuel cell. Hey, it's a Rally. In Utah. Nuff said.

Pre-Rally -

I left for SLC direct from work on Thursday afternoon and rode to Baker City, OR where I spent the night. On the road by 5 am, the uneventful run into SLC was smooth and I arrived around 1:30 pm and went directly to check in and did my tech and odo run and got my swag as well as a photo moment by the rally staff.

Just before I left on the odo run, my roomie found me and gave me a key card, so no stress there. Steve's odo directions on the other hand, always gives me stress.

😞 (both of my parents were teachers and Steve's mix of East, West, Right, Left, North, South directions always irk me and make me want to correct them to all one format.) I just make my own notes in shorthand and use that to ride the odo run, and ditto for the main rally, only whipping out the rally pack to read each bonus and fill in the answers, mileage and time.

Mad props to Steve Chalmers and all his, (possibly mad), helpers for once again putting on a fantastic event where a maximum of riders had a maximum of fun. As usual, Steve threw us a curve right away and gave us the full first leg rally pack on Friday night at the rider's meeting. And just like a Rally Bastard, he numbered the alternate routes 2, 3 & 4, leaving some of us to wonder if there was a #1 alternate that was going to be dropped on us in the morning. (there wasn't)

Once rally packs were in hand, I quickly returned to my room and it's quiet air conditioned and subdued coolness to plan. I highlighted the Main Route, (MR), and marked the bonus locations. This year it was possible to mark all of the boni fairly easily, as there weren't all that many of them. Steve told us we would ride harder, longer and for fewer points this year and boy howdy, he was NOT joking. 2.9 points, 9.6 points, (a biggie!), a lot of 3.something point boni. I noted a bunch of fun, but slow roads on the MR. I then read and discarded all the alternate routes as unworthy of further attention. Some good points, but not what I wanted to do this year.

Primarily I wanted to ensure a FINISH this year, having DNF'd last time in '06 at Steve's rally. Besides, traditionally, the alternates are potential sucker boni, though often tempting fun in their own way.

Rally Day -

First things first, the Slow Ride. I had a 15 minute wait for the others in front of me. Then I was up. I can do this. Last time in '06 I stalled the engine during my first attempt.....and re-started w/o putting a foot down to finish successfully. This year, I repeated that same feat. Shorter distance, longer time required, still stalled, still nailed it. Steve was laughing when I was getting my rally pack signed.

One of the early note worthy boni was just off I-80 on 65 North. 65 runs through a State Park with massive twisties along the first half, then over to I-84 with some points for a mileage to Ogden sign at mile post, (MP), 110 or so. Great fun I'm sure, but no other points there after literally the first 200 yards. I decided to duck in for those, then back out to I-80 and beat feet East, detour West on 84 for the bonus there, then back East to 80 and on to Little America, WY for a gas receipt bonus worth ~nearly~ TEN points! Then come back and if time was there, pick up the MR again on 150 heading South.

<understatement mode on>

It was kinda windy in Wyoming.

<understatement mode off>

Coming back, it looked like I had enough time, so I peeled off on 150 South instead of following my gut instincts and staying on 80 all the way to 40 for the run into Herber City for the first checkpoint. 150 is a beautiful, scenic road with many, many tourons* and drivers going well under the speed limit of 55 to soak up all that scenery. IOW, a slow road. And then there's the 10,347' pass. Thankfully, there are some passing zones and most of the traffic was heading North. I knew I was running out of time on 150 and when I finally got to 32 I turned the wrong way w/o realizing it. Miles went by and no I-40 signs.....finally a sign with an arrow pointing to I-40! I took the turn and wicked it up only to get to another sign with an arrow directing me "To I-40". finally I actually got to I-40 and headed "East", (though turned South), on I-40 to Herber City.

The last available bonus before the checkpoint was in Herber City proper, right on Main Street. I spotted it as I went by, but still hadn't seen the checkpoint and had only ten minutes left in the window. Oh, and it was PowWow days in Herber City. (I later accused Steve of holding the CP there -just- because they would have mass amounts of people wandering across the streets right before the checkpoint and huge traffic jams too. He only smiled.) I passed the bonus location up and continued to the CP. Crap! It was only a few blocks farther down. A glance at the time, I have 9 minutes to make it back to the bonus, and return to the CP on time. Fate? It was 9 minutes that I needed and didn't have in '06 that caused me my DNF.

I made a u-turn anyway and headed back to the last available bonus. I had to wait for people to cross the street, but made all the lights. Bonus collected, I headed back to the CP with only minutes to spare. I caught EVERY red light along the way. (Ok, only three of them, but frustratingly slow), and had to wait for PowWowians to cross the street at a crosswalk too. I'm pretty certain I was the very last person to reach the first CP, but I made it. Steve takes my leg one packet and hands me my next

packet, telling me they will be here for 10 minutes into Leg 2 in order to allow people to do sit ups for the first bonus of leg 2.

I quickly scan the bonus pack and shuck gear to do the sit ups. Bill G's pretty wife holds my feet and offers encouragement as I do 30 push ups before wearing out. 100 were possible for max points, but only three studs were capable of that. (So THAT's why Silvie is always so happy...) Then I tossed my gear on and headed just up the street to the Subway for lunch and planning. Steve had given us the rest of the rally pack at CP 2, so I was able to plan the outline for the entire rest of my rally here. No one else chose the Subway, perhaps preferring the Wendys in the parking lot of the 66 station where the CP was, or just forgetting that Subway makes for some good rally food and has A/C. I spent 60 minutes eating and planning and was nicely cooled off when I was ready to ride again.

The MR took us East, then South on 191 to Helper and farther South to I-70. An out and back to Arches NP was worth good points, so I planned on doing the easy 100 mile run there and back to the MR before heading West on 70 to 24 and down to Hanksville for the next CP. As I pulled up to the Arches NP entrance window, other riders in sight, the nice park ranger lady says: "Are you part of the rally?" errr, why yes, I am. "Oh, are you going to Hanksville and then taking the long way back to SLC like the other riders?" (She knows more of my route than *I* do!), err, ah, we all have our own plans, it just depends on what interests us.

I get my receipt, do my paperwork and head back out going North on 191, glad I didn't have to go through Moab this year. I-70 is windy as usual, but no dust storms this year, so it's all good. I was doing ok on time, but didn't have extra so having only two boni available from Arches to Hanksville worked out well. The last bonus turned out to be Goblin State Park, and required a picture of the entrance building. (The bonus does not say how far off the hwy this is, and at the hwy there are no mileage signs other than one for Goblin Valley - 30 miles.)

The road off the hwy starts out as this narrow, badly chip sealed goat path for a few miles, then you come over a rise and BEHOLD, a beautiful, wide, well paved, smooth, nicely lined peach of a road. (musta changed counties or something), then it comes to an intersection and you take a turn for the last 7 miles into the park on a winding, but decent road. Several riders were heading out as I headed in, making me feel better about my choice of getting this bonus as none waved me off or looked frantic. Turned out to only be 11 miles off the hwy. Bonus collected, I turned around and headed back out to the main road. I passed a dirt road that -appeared- to head back in the direction of the hwy and recall thinking that it could be shorter, but you'd have to be a fool to take a street bike down that w/o *knowing* it went all the way through and wasn't gated or blocked in some way. (Someone tried it on a GTS...)

I got to the 66 station CP as perhaps one of the last 4 riders to show up. After reviewing my options some more and having a spicy chicken sandwich and a quart of Poweraid for dinner, I headed out East on 24 as the day finished easing into night. By the time I reached Capital Reef NP, the sunset had shown me some beautiful colors on the rocky landscape and darkness was very nearly complete. I had left the CP with two other riders and our trio of headlights, HID and Halogen, made for it's own light show against the rocky walls as we passed through the park. We played some bonus tag at a few stops, then came to the Hickman Natural Bridge parking area and I turned off, while they continued on. This was a hiking bonus, and it only said "between marker post 5 and 6", so some may have worried that was 5 and 6 -

miles- and opted not to do it. It turned out to be 5 and 6 tenths of a mile, so only a bit over a half mile hike, up hill, in the dark. :-) Maura Bernie Jo Gatensby gave me this look of frustration and angst from her ST and said "I could DIE out there!" and headed back out for the next bonus. I grabbed my 3 D cell mag light off the Tanji cell and went for a hike. Really quite pleasant too. I took the required pic showing the sign for Navajo Knobs and walked most of the way back down hill to the parking area sans artificial light, just enjoying the night sky and sounds of nature. Oxtar Matrix boots still rock.

At Torrey there was an optional out and back South to Boulder, UT and another bonus to do with the Anasazi Indian Village, but the 2nd CP had closed at 9 pm, and the 3rd opened at 11:30 pm, closing at 1 am, so I decided the points were not worth the time or risk and kept to the MR along the winding hwy 24 to I-70 and then West to the 89 jct. where I checked the clock, the map, the mileage and stayed on I-70 all the way to I-15 and turned South to Beaver and the Chevron station where CP 3 was. I believe I was in the last 5 or so so show up there.

There was an optional out and back bonus for a fuel receipt in Cedar City, UT. It was good points, and I wanted some buffer mileage, Just In Case, ™, so I headed South immediately after leaving Beaver to do the 100 miles of out and back before returning to the MR. It was a quick and painless run, with only one false receipt that didn't have Cedar City as the location.

The last leg of the MR was taking us along hwy 21 to Milford and up 257 to Delta with lots of low point boni along the way to break up the monotony. Well, some of it at least. 257 is one of *the* most boring roads I've ridden in Utah. Strait and very deer friendly. One to avoid unless you need to go there. Nearing Delta, there was a bonus at Old Fort Deseret where I ran into Lola and Frank and learned they had a deer strike. Thankfully both were ok and amazingly, none of their lighting had taken damage, only some plastic, at least in the darkness of the moment. Frank was taking a much needed IB Hotel break while Lola was rather wired and chatty. I read the bonus, read the info sign, and wrote down both the section of the sign that said "Two teams of 98 men" in quotes as well as the direct answer to Steve's bonus question that asked "how many men and how many shifts did it take to build the fort?" which was 196 men, and two shifts. I wonder how many missed that question?

From Delta the MR took us over to Nephi for a gas receipt bonus, then up I-15 to Lehi where we were to detour West on 73 out to Dugway before heading North to I-80 and back to SLC and the finish. I had some pleasant riding as the sunrise progressed on the way to Nephi, got my gas receipt and did my paperwork, then hit I-15 with the intent of scoring a couple more boni and shortcutting it back to the finish with some time to spare. I was considering the potential of the 50 mile out and back dirt road bonus, but really not seriously, having read of the difficulty from previous years.

Out on I-15 zooming along at +10 I spot a color not found in nature 'stich along the side of the road with a Smörgåsbord of tool debris on the road beside a blue FJR. I quickly change lanes and pull off behind the rider to find our own Iggy looking sweaty and very stressed, helmet off, (which tells me he's been at this problem too long already), and wide eyed. I ask if he's got it under control. "NO!" What's the problem? says I. "I got a flat and the plug won't hold." I hopped off the bike and told Matt not to worry, I had a fresh set of gummy worms and tube of glue. Matt says "Glue? You're supposed to use glue?! I don't have any glue...." He's obviously not

having a good time here. Even so, his very next sentence was "Are you ok on time? Just go if you don't have the time. I'll deal with it." I didn't even consider leaving. I already had over the minimum mileage and was ok with the points I had in the bag. I pulled out my tools and flat repair kit, Matt removed his plug while explaining to me he was going for the 1600 mile BBG alternate route and needed 140 more miles in the next two hours and twentyfive minutes before the end of the rally. Apparently he hit a porcupine and a quill got in his rear tire. Now that's a road hazard!

I tossed Matt the reamer from my kit as his lacked one and he reamed the hole in his tire while I threaded a fresh gummy worm, inserting it with liberal amounts of glue. Shortly Matt was airing up his tire again and we checked the plug for leakage. No air was escaping, so things were looking good. Matt wanted me to leave, but I wasn't going anywhere until he had more pressure as I wanted to make sure it would hold, despite it looking ok at that point. Soon the little pump was over 33 psi and still no leaks so I agreed to go and finished gearing up. Matt was already putting his gear on as I pulled away. Matt still had over two hours left and later passed me on I-15 looking good. I gave him the thumbs up as he went by, hoping to encourage him and silently wishing him good fortune for the next couple of hours. My parting shot as I had pulled away from the shoulder was "Don't get your envelope torn open!"

At this point I knew I would be credited for an extra 15 minutes, but decided not to push my luck on getting a last bonus and just call it good. I'd had a good ride so far and was enjoying the last stretch of stress free road knowing I didn't need to push to get back to the finish on time, unlike my '06 year's hasty, stress filled ride to the missed CP. At the finish line I pulled up and Steve told me I had another 15 minutes if I wanted or needed it due to helping Matt. I assured him I was good and gave him my paperwork to sign me in and my ending bonus for my still sealed envelope and final CP finish bonus, then it was off to park and go through my rally pack to double check every bonus to make sure I had all the info, all in the right places, and essentially all my ducks in a row. I double checked my mileage & time numbers to make sure they were linear which meant I hadn't screwed one up writing it down and that every receipt and picture had the required info on it plus the bonus number it was for prior to turning in my rally pack.

I finished! I finally finished the 1088. Seems simple, but we all have our burdens to bear and this had been one of mine for the last two years. I was unable to get away for '07, so had to wait until '08 to redeem myself at the 1088. While happy with my ride, I honestly didn't feel it was a top twenty effort, though I had gotten some good points and had pushed myself to be competitive, including some out and back runs that I didn't think too many other riders went for. I was happy to finish and guessed that I was in the top 50 percentile, which was a good performance for any rider in any rally.

After a 3 hour nap preceded by a couple of good and well earned beers & a seriously needed shower, I went down to the banquet room and joined my fellow 1088 riders. The chow was excellent and I'd have eaten more except I had to ride home immediately after the banquet and could ill afford a food coma. Steve was both entertaining and emotional as he told us various bits about riders and the rally, interspersing raffle drawings for sets of tires and gas cards with the top rider's positions and scores. Eventually Steve told us the top finishers and the banquet was over, much to the dismay of us all.....until Steve reminded us of the open bar!

There were lots of smiles and hugs and handshakes among the riders as we

congratulated each other on our finishing position or just our ride in general. Some vented about mistakes they made, some they should have gone for or sit ups they wished they had been able to do, others just enjoyed and shared stories from their rides and everyone looked like they were having a great time. Thanks for the great presentation Steve. Well done! And congratulations to all of the 1088 riders, regardless of position or finish.

*tourist + moron = touron

Eric Vaillancourt
1088 rider #30
17th of 76
1260 corrected miles
Oregon City, OR