

Drive Instructions

MINIs On the Dragon 2008

Cherohala Skyway Run on the Way to MOTD 2008

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(although it probably doesn't work at MOTD)

Just look for my car, Jango... a Pepper White '06 MCS with
Pepper White roof and painted arches

WARNING: I made this drive in 2006, but these instructions are being compiled for the first time for MOTD 2008. This means that mileages are not exact and that the maps may not be perfect... They have not been tested yet. I have put a great deal of effort into these instructions, but please do not trust them exclusively. Bring a map, just in case!

Date/Time: The group will start assembling at 10 am on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at the back parking lot of a McDonalds in the Southeast corner of Cleveland, TN, a little town about 25 minutes north of Chatanooga, TN. We will depart the lot at 11am. **Please arrive with a full tank of gas.** Given decent weather and little traffic, I'd expect that we will arrive in Robbinsville around 2:30pm. A beautiful 30 minute drive will have you at Fontana.

The Route: We will head out from Cleveland, TN along US-74 towards Ducktown, TN, where we will turn north toward Tellico Plains, TN. I found these roads for MOTD 2006 on a motorcycle enthusiast website and they are a wonderful introduction to the area's roads. We drive along a whitewater river for 15 miles or so (or a dry, jagged rock bed, depending on if the dam is open or closed... either way, it's very cool). At Tellico Plains, we join the Cherohala Skyway, a twisty, winding road that runs through a National Park. The views are stunning and the roads a joy for a MINI driver. We will stop along the way a few times to enjoy the view and give the brakes a rest.

Our tour ends in Robbinsville because many folks will be staying in hotels and inns there. It's also the last chance to hit a decent grocery store or a restaurant other than those at Fontana, so people may want to stop for provisions. Personally, I'll be stopping for gas as it's a lot cheaper to buy gas in Robbinsville than at Fontana. I'd be happy to lead anyone the rest of the way to Fontana, if you wish. Just stop at the gas station with me and we will organize/head-out from there. It's a very easy drive, though.

Cost: There is no cost for this event, but if you see me at one of the MOTD 2008 functions, I probably wouldn't turn down a beer if you felt like buying an extra!

Radios: FRS radios are wonderful for this type of event. We will run on Channel 8 (no sub-channel).

The Drive: This is a SCENIC drive. Please keep all four wheels on your side of the yellow line. I'll keep the pace brisk, but will happily respond to radio requests to slow down a bit. I ran these directions a couple of years ago and they are fairly easy to follow, but if you get lost, a basic map will get you to Fontana. Don't worry. It's hard to get completely lost in this part of the country as the roads are simple, few and far between.

Warnings: Mind your speed on anything that resembles a highway... radar WILL be present. Fines for speeding on the Foothills Parkway or Cherohala Skyway are very serious (Federal roads), from what I've been told, so we will be taking it easy on those roads in particular.

I include the following article with my drive instructions at every chance I get. It is very well written. I can not emphasize enough that the Dragon and other spirited roads in the area demand your full respect. They are not our personal race track! There are others that we are sharing the road with and those drivers deserve our best efforts to keep our cars inside the boundaries of safe driving.

While driving the Dragon at MOTD 2006, I had a Harley Davidson motorcycle lose control as he came around a bend. He was driving towards me when his back tire fishtailed and he came $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way across my lane. I was driving quickly, but was in control, alert and the car was in good mechanical repair. I maxed out my brakes and stopped 10 feet short of hitting him. He was carrying way too much speed through that corner (especially for the bike that he was on) when he lost control and he was not paying attention to his line, oncoming traffic or the placement of his bike on the road. He was very lucky that I was prepared. Please don't entrust your vehicle or your life to the preparedness of others.

Please drive within your skill limit and ask us to slow down if the group is pushing you too far. We all have different cars and different levels of driving skill. My goal is provide a fun, enjoyable and (most of all) safe drive to begin our time at MOTD 2008.

HOW TO DRIVE THE DRAGON (Reprinted from an article by Ron Johnson at www.tailofthedragon.com):

Drive the Dragon at your skill level - don't try to push it or keep up with faster vehicles.

STAY IN YOUR LANE, There are videos available for sale that show vehicles cutting the corners and taking chances that might appear "fun" while sitting in your easy chair. **BEWARE !** This style of driving on the Dragon can cost you dearly. The challenge of the Dragon is to take the many curves in the best line possible and both lanes **IS NOT** "the line". Drive Florida if you like to straighten out the curves.

Do **NOT** sightsee. The Dragon is to drive, not to watch the sights. On many runs I don't even see what is on the side of the road. I'm watching the roadway way ahead.

Look far ahead at the road, curves, bushes, other vehicles, etc. If you haven't seen the hazards right in front of you, you are going to hit them anyway, so you might as well pay attention to what you have time to avoid.

We have seen deer, bear, turkeys, and wild boar on the roadway. Be ready to brake and slow. When we say brake we **DO NOT** mean slamming on the brakes. That will get you turned around in a hurry and it's no fun looking at where you've been at any speed.

Maintain a "safe zone". Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you. Watch your rear view mirrors for faster vehicles. If you see a faster rider/driver coming up behind you, pull over to the right of your lane, slow down just a little, and wave them around. It is much safer to let a faster vehicle around you than to try to outrun them. **NEVER** stay left trying to keep someone from passing you. **NEVER** pull off the road onto the shoulder unless it is at one of the pull-off parking areas. It may be illegal to pass on the Dragon, but I'll let a faster vehicle get around me to protect my safe zone.

There will always be faster drivers than you. Don't try to be the King of the Dragon.

Drive the Dragon many times before trying to challenge it. Then you still need to respect it at all times.

DO NOT STAND ON THE BRAKES if you see danger ahead. You are much better off to tap the brakes and maintain control. Some 90% of the accidents on the Dragon are due to speed and then over-braking. If you see another vehicle coming at you in your lane, hug the white line in your lane. In all likelihood you can avoid trucks and trailers if you stay alert and watch ahead.

DO NOT be spooked by other vehicles. **DO NOT** make sudden avoidance moves. You might have to adjust your line to avoid a car, truck, or bike, but **DO NOT** lay on the brakes or turn off the roadway suddenly unless that is the only out you have. Motorcycles might dent your car, but that is better than going off the bank and hitting a tree sideways. If a cycle is in your lane that is their mistake and problem ... don't let them force you into a worse situation for yourself.

Trucks are usually traveling at a very slow speed and you should have time to stop and back-up if you see one coming at you and taking the whole corner. Watch for signals from drivers/riders coming at you. Many times they will escort a big truck over the Dragon and wave a warning to you to pull over. **DO NOT** ignore these warnings.

Avoid driving hard on the Dragon in heavy traffic times. Weekends from 11 am to 5 pm are the busiest. These are the times to lay back and enjoy watching the "show" go by.

The early mornings (before 11 am) and the late afternoons (after 5 pm) have the least traffic.

ALWAYS stay 100% alert. You do not have the advantage of relaxing on the Dragon.

Make sure your vehicle is mechanically sound and that your tires are good.

Plan to make several runs, the first is always a nervous one then you can have fun on the second and third.

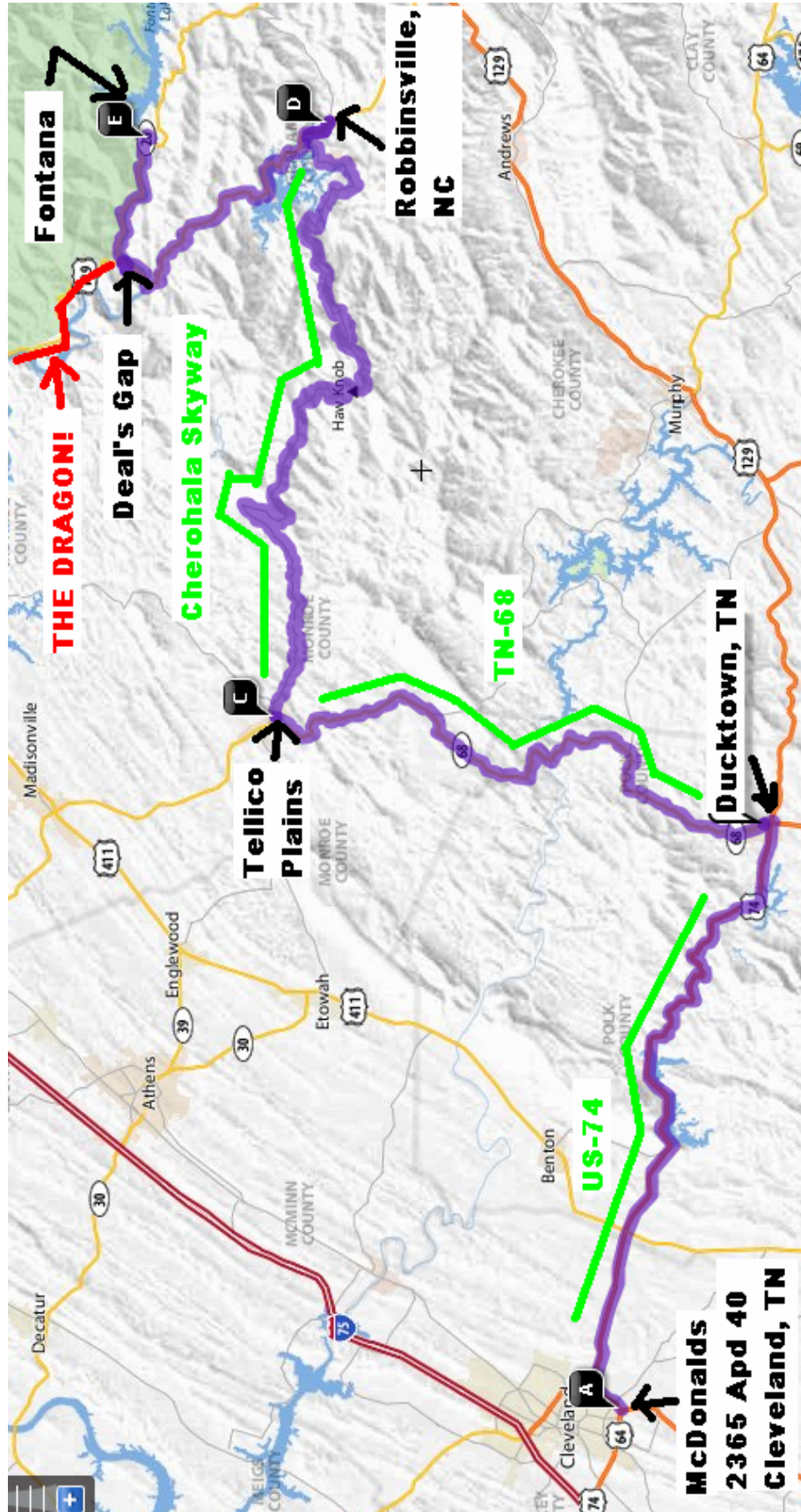
DO NOT over-use your brakes. Use your gears and **DOWNSHIFT**. A good Dragon driver **WILL NOT** use a lot of brakes.

Focus - do not daydream. Watch the road, your mirrors, and pay attention to other bikes/cars/trucks.

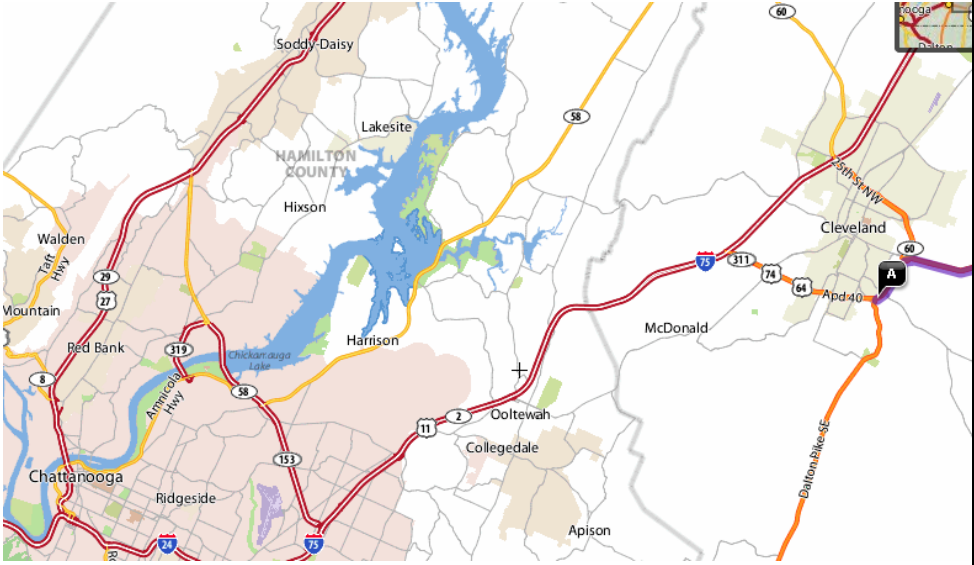
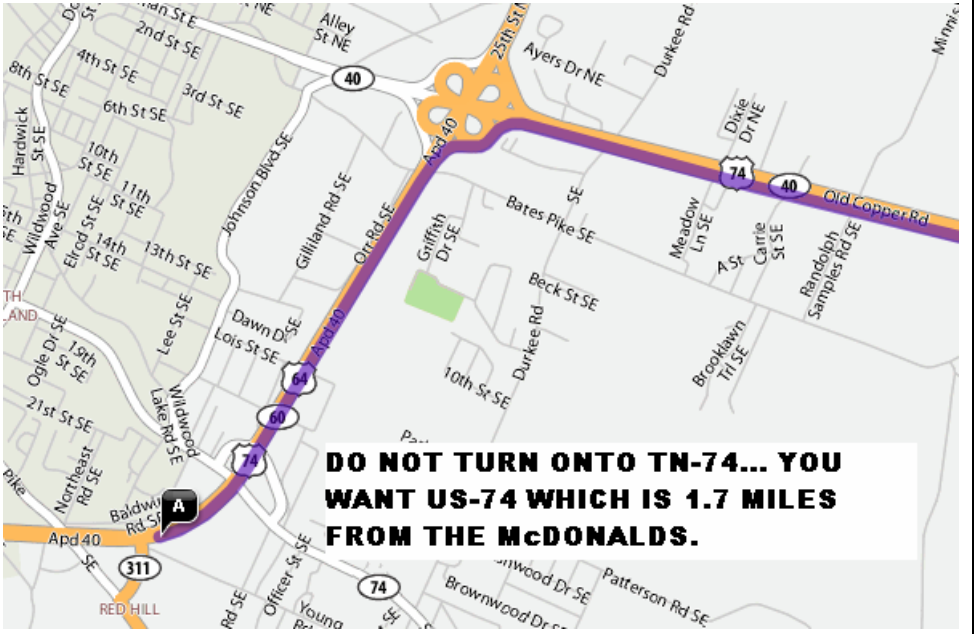
99% of the accidents on the Dragon come from the following:

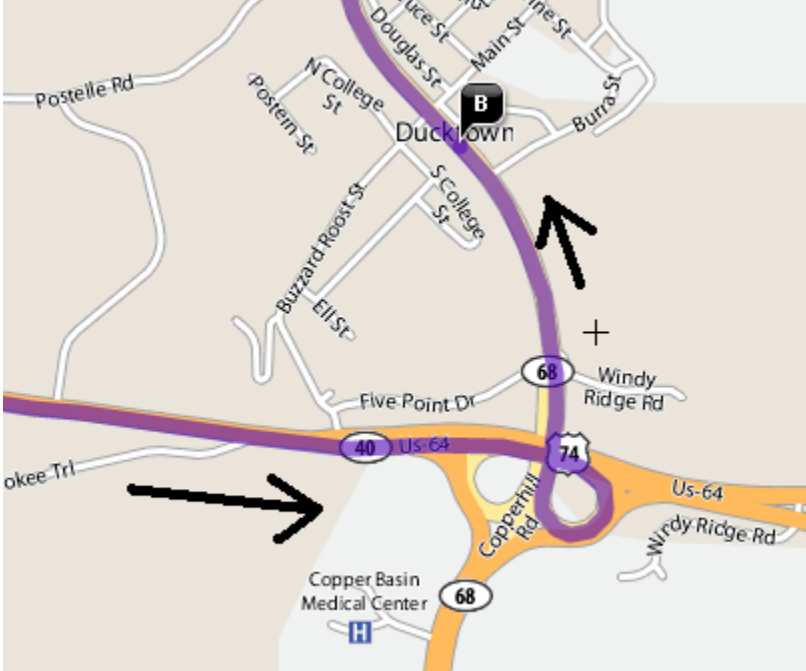
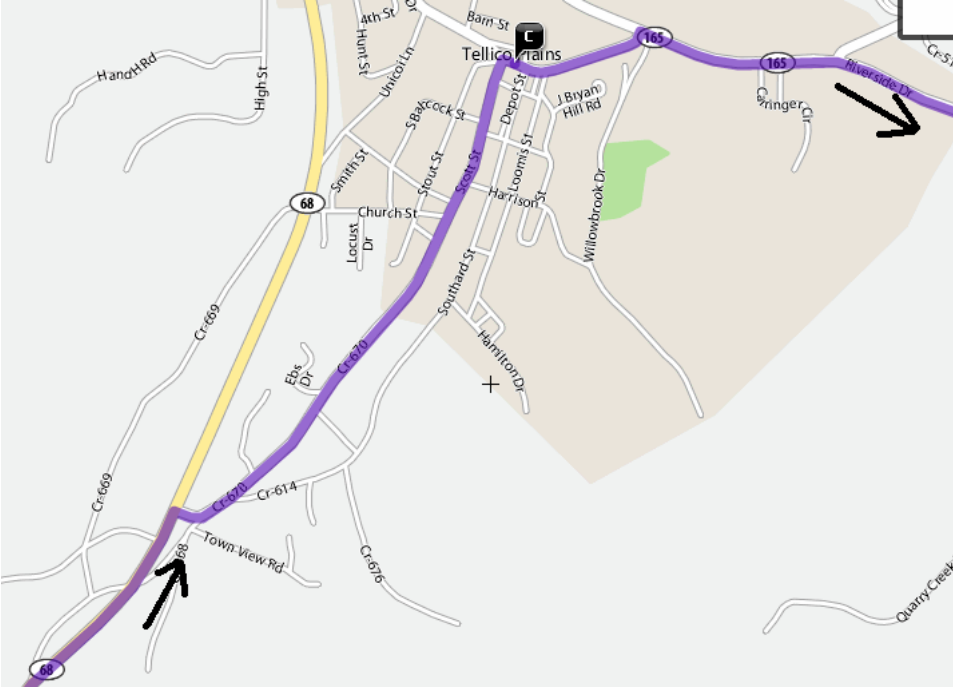
- Too much speed
- Too much brakes
- Inattentiveness
- Driving above your abilities

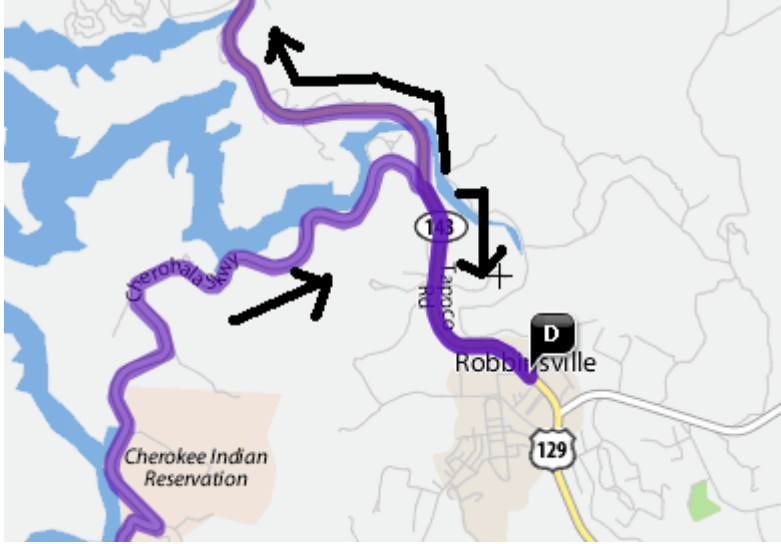
An Overview of the Route:



Step by step instructions:

Miles	Map	Directions
		<p>1: Meet up at the McDonalds at 2365 Apd 40, Cleveland, TN</p> <p>We depart at 11am on Wednesday morning</p>
<p>0 Miles on trip</p> <p>1.7 miles to next turn</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RESET TRIP METER NOW</p>	<p>2: TURN RIGHT onto APD 40 from the McDonalds Parking Lot</p>
<p>1.7 miles on trip</p> <p>33.8 miles to next turn</p>		<p>3: TURN RIGHT onto US 74 East (AKA Old Copper Rd).</p> <p>DO NOT BE FOOLED INTO TURNING ON TN-74, YOU WANT US-74, WHICH IS 1.7 MILES FROM McDONALDS (not just around the corner).</p>

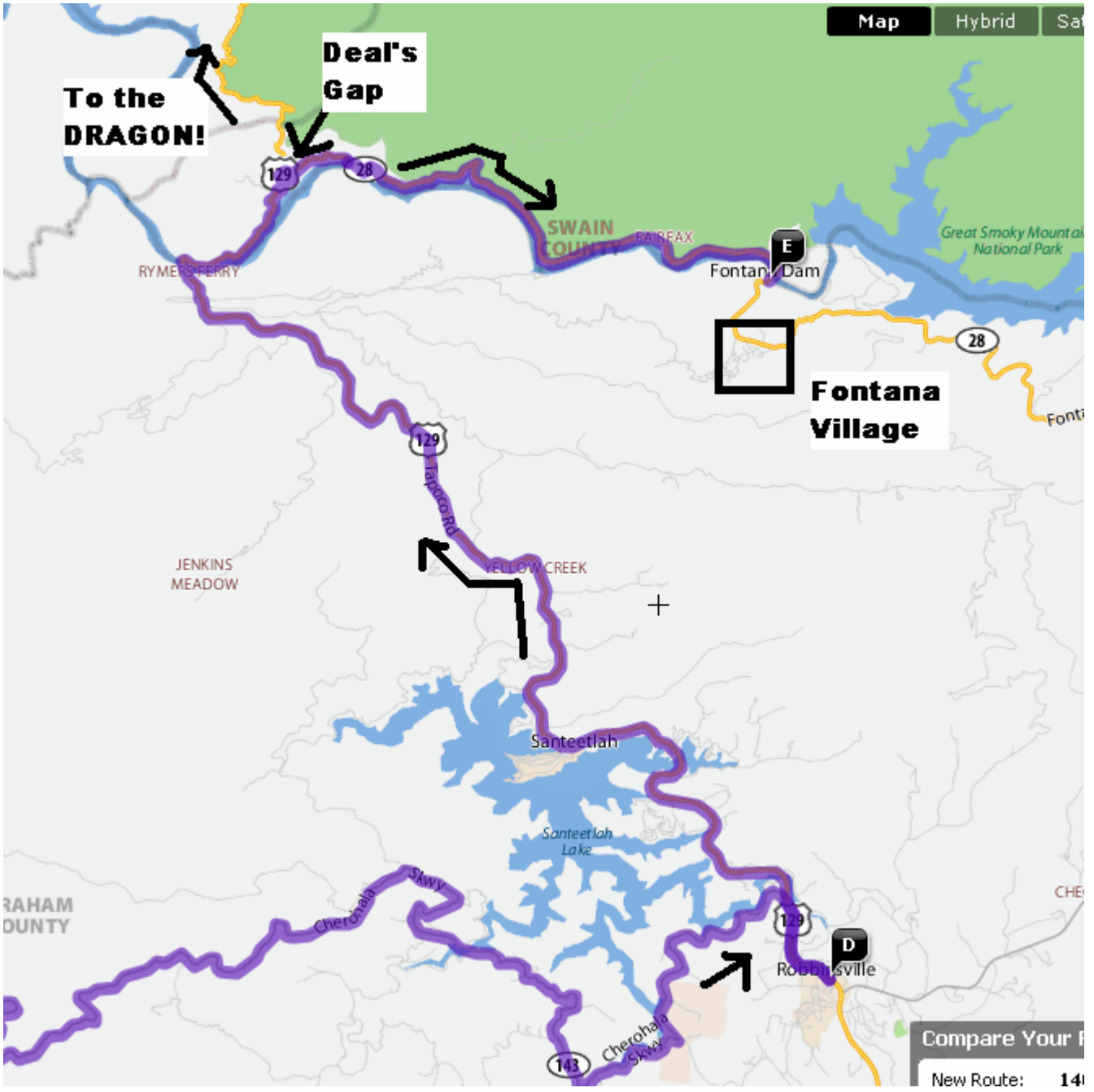
<p>35.5 Miles on trip</p> <p>31.5 miles to next turn</p>		<p>4: FOLLOW SIGNS (ramp on right) to TN-68 North towards Ducktown, TN</p>
<p>66.0 miles on trip</p> <p>Turn & Drive 1.1 mile</p> <p>Turn & Drive 0.3 mile</p> <p>Turn & Drive</p> <p>Next turn in 51.2 miles</p>		<p>5: TURN RIGHT onto Cr-670 (AKA Scott St) and drive 1.1 mile.</p> <p>TURN RIGHT onto Veterans Memorial Drive and drive 0.3 miles</p> <p>TURN RIGHT onto TN-165 AKA River Road AKA Riverside Dr. AKA Cherohala Skyway AKA NC-143 (in NC)</p>

<p>118.6 Miles on trip</p> <p>6.9 to next turn</p>		<p>6: End of the line!</p>
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Now you have a decision to make...

Go to Robbinsville: When we reach US-129 (AKA Tapoco Rd.), you can turn right with me and continue about 1 mile South to Robbinsville. There are lots of restaurants, gas stations and cell phone towers here. There is a large grocery store as well. If you are staying at Fontana, this is your last chance for cell phone coverage, a full selection of groceries and relatively inexpensive gas. I'm going to stop for gas and run into a large convenience store to pick up anything that I need. I'd be happy to lead a caravan the rest of the way to Fontana if you wish.

Go to Fontana: If you want to keep on and go directly to Fontana, turn left onto US-129 (AKA Tapoco Rd.) and drive for 17.4 miles. This will bring you to a little gas station at a wonderful little spot called Deals Gap. Turning left at Deal's Gap will take you to the Tennessee state line and the East side of the Dragon in under 2 miles. Turning Right at Deal's Gap onto NC-28 here will take you to Fontana in 7.7 miles... look for the signs and turn right just past the Texaco after you pass the narrow bridge... by this time on Wednesday, you could also just follow the steady stream of MINIs... you will probably see more MINIs on this road than any other type of car! An ideal world, no? :P



One Page Instructions for Scenic Drive around the Smoky Mountains – MOTD 2008

1		Meet up at the McDonalds at 2365 Apd 40, in Cleveland, TN
2	Trip: 0 mi 1.7 to next turn	We will depart at 11am. TURN RIGHT from the McDonalds parking lot onto Apd 40. Reset your trip meter as you make this turn.
3	Trip: 1.7 mi 33.8 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto US-74 (AKA Old Copper Rd) Do not be fooled into turning on TN-74 which is very close to the McDonalds.
4	Trip: 35.5 mi 31.5 to next turn	FOLLOW SIGNS (ramp on right) to TN-68 North towards Ducktown
5a	Trip: 66.0 mi 1.1 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto Cr-670 (AKA Scott St.)
5b	Trip: 67.1 mi 0.3 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto Veterans Memorial Drive
5c	Trip: 67.4 mi 51.2 to next turn	TURN RIGHT onto TN-165 (AKA Riverside Dr, River Rd, the Cherokee Skyway and NC-143 once you get into NC)
6	Trip: 118.6 mi	End of Cherokee Skyway – terminates at NC-129 (AKA Tapoco Road)

For Shopping, Gas and Cellular Phone Signal:

Robbinsville is about 1 mile to the right.

To Fontana Village:

Deal's Gap is 17.4 miles to the left. Turn right at Deal's Gap onto NC-28 and continue 7.7 miles to Fontana Village. Turn right after the Texaco that is just past the narrow bridge.