

8th Annual Unofficial "Miatas at the Gap" Event

We Went To Deals Gap and Had Fun! - 2004!

by Sara J McBride

In July of 2002, I went to work all bright and happy when I was called into a meeting and received bad news. My company had decided to include me in their downsizing. I had been laid off! I left the office and decided to stop by Chuck Will's house to drop off an item that he wanted to borrow for his trip to the annual "Miatas at the Gap" trip when it hit me. I could go to the Gap! Chris Poglitsch also stopped by and said "Stay with us at Tapoco Lodge!" Well, what's a girl to do but say, "I'm there!". My first trip to Deal's Gap and I had a great time.

I missed the 2003 event, but was able to make the trip to the biggest unofficial event in the Miata world this July. It's called a non-event because there is no fee to attend, you stay where you want, do what you want and nobody is in charge. (A quick story. This year a non-Miata owner showed up at Tapoco Lodge and wanted to see "the person in charge" to complain about a Miata he felt was driving too fast. He couldn't grasp the concept that no one was in charge. "Who's in charge here?" became a running joke.)

Rick and I secured reservations at Fontana Village and then made plans with the Wills and John Blaylock to drive down on Thursday. We drove through a horrendous rain storm outside of Knoxville, but the sky cleared up as we hit US129 and made a clean, top down run through the Dragon. One advantage of going down a day early is that starting Friday afternoon, the Dragon is a zoo with Miatas, motorcycles and law enforcement.

Friday morning, we met some other Miata owners and then decided to cruise over to Tapoco Lodge to see what was going on. As we drove on SR28 from Fontana, I was driving and look! A great big semi was heading towards me! I was on a straight stretch, but still, I slowed down and hugged the right side of the road as he went by. (Visions of looking up at the bottom of a semi trailer from my Gap trip in May of 2003 were dancing through my head!) The Lodge parking lot was getting busy. Joe "Knobmeister" Portas was there with his tents along with other vendors. I accepted Joe's offer of a Pepsi for my thirst and bug spray for my legs. After a while, I decided to go on a solo run through the Dragon.

I took it slow (honest), and had a nice run. I stopped at the Overlook and chatted with two other Miata owners and a couple from Cleveland who were riding Harleys. My return run was much faster as I was following a Miata whose driver was an autocrosser. He was good! He pulled over about two-thirds of the way through as he was losing his brakes and needed to let them cool down. I continued on and had a great, spirited run, with the only car in my way pulling over. A honk, a wave and a "Thanks!" to that driver.

That night we cruised south to Robbinsville for dinner. The place we went to was recommended by a local, but that night it from suffered from uneven reviews of the meals. Then back north to the Lodge, where we met more new friends and old. Bryan, who I'd met at my first Gap trip, George and Deb Crawford who we'd met at the Northern Exposure trip in 2002, and Jenny, who we'd met at the Cincinnati club's Miata Gathering last fall.

Saturday morning was the photo shoot at the dam, but we managed to get in a Dragon run first. At the dam, the grass was not mowed, so it was a long line of cars along the drive. More looking at cars and talking to their owners. Jack, a dog who wore goggles while riding in his owner's Miata, was a hit and it seemed everyone was taking his picture.

Saturday afternoon we met up with club members John and Marsha

Schaub, Don and Becky Hill, and Craig Johnson and we all cruised the Cherohala Skyway to Telli-co Plains. A rain shower hit us as we were nearing the Skyway, but the six Miatas drove on and soon were in sunshine. We ate at the "Bistro on the River" and it was a great meal. We met a local couple who had a Miata and talked them into returning the Lodge with us to meet more Miata owners. Then we noticed that Don and Becky's right rear tire was low. Bent rim from a pothole earlier in the day, but Fix-A-Flat saved the day. We cruised back at a sedate pace to the Lodge. (Note: The Hills made it back to Indiana okay.)

Sunday morning saw Rick and me hitting the road early. We had another clean run through the Dragon and then headed north to Indy.

This is a very unique event due to it's structure, but maybe that's the reason it's so popular. Some people do nothing but "Dragon Runs", some investigate the other great roads in the area, while others park their cars at the Lodge and do nothing but socialize. However you decide to spend your time, you're going to meet great people, see cool cars and have a good time. We've got our reservations for next year. See you there!

More photos can be found at <http://2cat.com/photos/gap04/index.html>

(L) Indy Miatas on the Cherohala Skyway.

(R) John Blaylock follows the Wills through a curve.



Photos by Sara J McBride

At an overlook on the Skyway, John S. looks on as Craig shows John B., Chuck and Marsha an old brake rotor. We're not sure why it was in his car while on vacation.

