

Hello everyone,

Be sure to check the hotline in case we have to cancel at the last minute. **HOTLINE #: 925.443.8705**

After the latest rains, things are very wet at the ranch, so make sure you stay on the roads. Drive down the center of the road to avoid making the road wider. Drive slowly through the puddles in the road, they are not too deep and have a hard packed bottom.

As you drive down highway 4 at 55 to 60 mph and turn up the road to the ranch, realize that you are on a dirt road now that goes by people's houses. Please drive 7 mph on the driveway. Once past the cattle grate and the first junction to the left, 10mph is fast enough. If you drive fast, you will send dust and grit all over the place. Slow down, take it easy, there is plenty of time to get up to the launch site. You will keep the Rancher's happy and your car will like it too.

We will be flying on a working cattle ranch in a field that hasn't changed much in the last 10,000 years. There are no paved roads, sidewalks, mowed lawns, or anything else you are used to having at the launches in Livermore. Treat this land with respect, and leave only foot prints when you head home.

You will find rocks, squirrel holes, sticks, cow bones, and other assorted items that can twist or break ankles or legs if you are not paying attention. You will also see wildlife. In addition to the bulls and cows, there are squirrels, snakes, coyotes, mountain lions, golden eagles, bald eagles, buzzards, and other critters. Again, if you pay attention, none of these critters will bother you. If you have kids, keep an eye on them, don't let them wander far without an adult.

This is rattle snake country the same as the hills around Livermore. As long as you pay attention to where you are walking and where you put your hands and feet, you won't have a problem. Stay away from the rock fences, the blackberry bushes, and the brushy rock formations. Those are all snake places. If your rocket lands in one of those places, come get me or one of the club officers to help you get it out. Now, I am not trying to scare anyone, I just want to make sure you are paying attention. My brothers, sister, cousins, and I played all over those hills as children and never got bit and I want to make sure no one else does.

When you get to the launch area, follow the marked road to the field.

Even though it looks like there is a shorter way, don't do it. There is a reason I mark the road where I do. There is a road down the center of the field where we launch. You can park on either side of that road. On the east side you can go as far as the creek but on the west side, do not go more than one car length from the road. Most of the ground is sod over mud. If you break through the sod, your car will drop to its axles in the mud. Four wheel drive will not save you. The ground under the sod is almost liquid. Some of you will remember when I pulled a lost rocket out of the ground. The rocket had punched a hole through the sod. I was able to stick my arm down into the ground all the way to my elbow without any problem, slide my fingers under the rocket, and pull it out.

If I can stick my arm up to the elbow in the ground, imagine what something with the weight of a car will do. The places we will mark out have gravel under them and are solid. A few feet farther up the hill are not.

As I mentioned, this is a working ranch and there are a few ranch rules.

- Leave the cows and bulls alone. There are a lot of newborn calves in the field, many born in the last week. If you see one, don't go too close and do not get between the calves and the cows, especially small children.

- If you see a calf that appears to be in trouble, that is, it has fallen in a hole or in the creek and does not seem to be able to get out, come and get me and I will rescue it.

- Leave the wild critters alone. It is OK to look, but don't try to pick them up. The rattle snakes you find out there are real, not toys, and they bite.

- If there are bee hives on the hill above where we launch, stay away from them. They are self protecting so you have been warned.

- Close any gates that you open.

- Do not do anything to deface or mess up the land. A rancher is just about the greenest person you will ever meet when it comes to his land. In this case, our family has been caring for this land for over 130 years. The worst thing you can do is to create ruts which cause erosion which is another reason to stay on the roads. Please pick up all of your trash and if you see trash, pick it up as well and take it home for proper disposal.

There is a lot of history in this area. Indians used to camp just south of where we launch and there are Indian grinding holes in many of the rocks.

The movies "Little House on the Prairie" and "The Big Country" were filmed around where we will be flying. The remains of the "Little House on the Prairie" set are just to the south-east of where we launch. The stage road from Stockton to the gold mines in Angels Camp went right through this area, and up the road a ways Black Bart used to rob them.

The History Channel filmed part of a program on Werner VonBraun near the ranch house.

We will rent a porta potty for the day but there is no water, food or anything else in the area so bring whatever you will need.

We have a barbecue grill I will fire up in the morning. I expect it to be really popular just for keeping warm. Bring your own dogs or burgers and have a warm lunch.

If anyone does get hurt, the closest hospital is in Oakdale, about a 15 minute drive from the Ranch (after you get back to the highway). There is a map to the hospital in the LUNAR document box if you should need it.

There are maps to the ranch and driving instructions on the LUNAR website.

If anyone has any questions, I will be happy to answer them.

Bill Orvis

This list is moderated. Your first post will have to be approved prior to being posted. Feel free to chat about anything your fellow rocketeers would find interesting.

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