

SoberBurn 2026

I went back to Burning Man for the third time. Once again, the decision to go was made very last minute, and once again, I wasn't really that prepared. The first couple of days in Black Rock City were so challenging that I almost gave up: crazy winds, sandstorms, rain, and mud. I went by myself, and every day became a personal challenge I needed to overcome and a lesson I needed to learn. I know how Burning Man looks from the outside, and I can tell you that every cliché about it is true. But that doesn't mean there aren't a million other ways to experience it. I've lived Burning Man the way you see it on social media, with all the sunrise parties, extravagant outfits, and complete intoxication. And it was super fun. But this time, I found myself discovering a completely different side of it.

This is how it all started. The last time I went to Burning Man was in 2022. Since then, I hadn't really felt the need to go back. Nothing had called me back to the desert. But this year, just four days before Burning Man started, something happened. I felt something very strong, both physically and emotionally, that suddenly took over my entire body. I had only felt something like this once before in my life, a few years ago, the last time I went to Burning Man. So this time, there was no hesitation. I knew this

feeling very well. It was the call from the desert. And when the desert calls, there's only one answer: Yes. I knew I needed to go. Something was waiting for me there. I only had a few days to plan everything, but strangely enough, it all came together so smoothly. I found a ticket almost immediately, booked my flights, arranged a rental car and a bike, booked my nights in Reno, and ordered all my gear from Amazon. Everything was falling into place. And then, suddenly, the day came. I flew to Reno, and the next morning, I was on my way to Black Rock City. I honestly couldn't believe what was happening. It all felt like a dream. How the fuck had I just thrown myself into such a big adventure at the very last minute? But I was loving it, and I felt incredibly grateful for how everything had come together and for the fact that I was finally going back to a place I loved so much. The road was almost empty. I was driving through the desert on my own, and I could already feel how special this adventure was going to be.

I arrived in Black Rock City on Tuesday evening. I barely had enough time to set up my tent before the crazy weather started. The winds picked up, sandstorms began hitting the city, and there really wasn't much I could do. So I decided to call it a night, get some sleep, and wake up early the next morning. But sleeping in a tent that feels like it's about to be blown away by the wind is

not fun at all. Everything inside was moving. The walls were shaking, the wind was roaring, and I honestly thought the whole thing was going to fly away at any moment. At some point, I realized that the only way I was going to get through the night was to cover my eyes, put in some earplugs, take a bunch of melatonin, and try to be completely unaware of what was happening around me. And so I did. It was a horrible night. But somehow, I made it through.

The next morning, I woke up excited about joining the legendary Naked Pub Crawl, which takes place on Wednesdays around the gay neighborhood in Black Rock City. I had never been to this event before, so this time I was super ready to go. However, it was cloudy and freezing cold. Not exactly the best day to have your junk hanging out. But anyway, I wasn't going to let that stop me. I went straight to the meeting point. I'm not a shy person, but I have to admit that finding myself alone in that situation, not knowing anybody, made me hesitate for a moment about whether to take my clothes off. But I felt that this was another challenge I needed to overcome. I hadn't come all this way to feel ashamed of my body or who I am. So off came the clothes. And there I was, surrounded by a few hundred naked people. Everyone seemed so happy, welcoming, and friendly that I immediately felt at home. I started meeting people, and I started

realizing that none of the things I had been worried about really mattered. I was there to experience something that, in itself, was incredibly liberating. A few hours later, I was completely uninhibited, super happy, not giving a fuck about anything, and just dancing with my dick out.

It was such a freeing experience. But at some point, I got super hungry and had to go back to my camp to eat something. I knew the pub crawl would end with a party at the tent of Comfort & Joy, but by then, the wind had picked up, and the sandstorms were making it almost impossible to go back out. I hesitated. Should I go or stay? But I guess the answer was pretty obvious. I wasn't there to stop or hesitate. So I put on my goggles and mask, grabbed my bike, and headed out. It was so hard to ride. I could barely see anything, but I was completely determined to find my way to that party. Somehow, I had this feeling that if I could overcome this, there would be a prize waiting for me on the other side. And so I made my way through the storm. When I finally got into the tent, I found a crowd of very drunk and intoxicated men, dancing and engaging with each other. But I have to be honest. I just wasn't feeling the vibe. I tried to find someone I liked, but I really couldn't. After everything I had gone through just to get there, I was starting to feel very disappointed. I wasn't looking for casual, meaningless sex. Lately, I've really

only been interested in human connection. And I couldn't find it there. At some point, I gave up. I was mad. I was stressed. I was covered in dust. And I remember saying: "Fuck this shit. Now this is a test for you. If you don't give me someone special, someone bright, someone unique, someone beautiful, I'm gonna get the fuck out of here. I hate this." No one appeared. So I walked toward the exit, where I had left my clothes, and as I was getting dressed, someone came up behind me and touched my back. I didn't even turn around. He simply asked me, "Are you coming or going?" "I'm leaving. I hate this shit." But then I decided to turn around and get a glimpse of the stranger standing behind me. And when I looked at him, I knew exactly what I wanted. I wanted him.

He introduced himself with his playa name. "I'm Diamond." I started laughing. He asked me what was so funny, and I said, "A diamond is the only thing I would accept at this moment in my life. And there you are." We started making out, and I could immediately sense that he was sober, present, and very, very attractive. I told him I couldn't really leave because of the storm, and he generously invited me to come with him to his camp, which was just next door. It's crazy how things fall into place. I obviously accepted, and we went together to his place. He offered me dinner. I met his friends. Then he took me to his tent, which

was beautiful, unlike mine. And we fucked exactly the way I wanted to: With connection, without hurry.

On Thursday, after riding all day around the city, I went into the tent at Comfort & Joy, not really looking for anything other than a nap and a place to hide from the crazy weather outside. So I just lay down, fully dressed, in one of the beds, while everyone around me was having sex. I slept for a little while, and when I woke up, I saw a handsome guy looking at me from across the entrance. I really wasn't planning on mingling with anybody, but when he asked if he could lie next to me, I obviously made an exception. He was kind, warm, funny, and incredibly flexible. We started chatting and laughing. A few minutes later, we were fucking, completely unaware of the important role he would play in my following days in Black Rock City. Some time later, when the weather had calmed down a little, we left the tent and decided to hang out around the city. We went to watch some wrestling matches, then went dancing at Pink Mammoth.

And after a few hours, as the sun was going down, I knew it was time to go to the Temple. Before I said goodbye to him, he showed me where his RV was parked, just one block away from my camp. Then I took my bike and rode to the Temple by myself. I was ready to write some letters, trying to find the

things I still needed to forgive, the wounds from my past that I still needed to put down on paper. But when I found myself inside that beautiful space, I realized something. I wasn't there anymore. I didn't need that anymore. Forgiveness had already transformed into something beautiful that had found its way inside of me. When I realized this, I broke down crying. It was so clear that the person standing there was completely different from the one who had come to that same place a few years ago. I had arrived expecting to find wounds that still needed healing, only to discover that something inside me had already changed. The purpose of my visit wasn't the one I had in mind. So I decided to write letters only of love and gratitude to my loved ones.

At that moment, I felt that I really needed a hug. I needed some comfort and support from someone. But as I found myself alone, I wasn't sure where to go or who to reach out to. And I remembered that this had been a constant in my life. I had found myself in similar situations before, unable to humble myself and ask for help from others, unable to reach out when I needed comfort. I knew that the playa was showing me another important lesson I needed to learn. Another challenge I needed to overcome. And this time, it was entirely up to me to find what I was looking for. So I decided to ask the first person who came my way for a hug. And I

did. She was one of the Temple Rangers, and I have to say, the hug I received wasn't really as warm or comforting as I had hoped. But at least I knew that I had overcome the fear of asking for what I needed. So I decided to try again. I approached another stranger, and this time, he gave me something much closer to what I was looking for. He even offered me a sound meditation, just for me. This time, I received exactly what I needed, and the last of my tears were washed away on his shoulder. And so, another lesson was hidden there for me. Sometimes we think that we will get everything we need the first time we ask for it. But we need to be willing to try again. To put our expectations aside and understand that things can come our way in different packages, in different ways, and at different times. And just because we don't get what we need the first time doesn't mean we should stop trying.

That night, it started raining. And it didn't stop for twelve hours. Saying that spending the night in my fucked-up tent was a nightmare would be an understatement. I spent the entire night freezing to death, with my feet completely wet, water dripping onto my head, and nowhere else to go. By morning, everything was a mess. The entire playa had turned into mud. I felt completely devastated, out of place, and on the verge of a complete meltdown. I had nothing to do and nowhere to go. The only thing I could

think of to calm myself down was to write. To put down on paper everything I had been feeling, everything I had experienced over the past few days, and everything that was happening to me at that very moment.

At some point in the afternoon, the sun started to peek through the clouds. A glimpse of hope painted the sky of Black Rock City again, and I could already feel myself getting better. I was going out. I was going to look for adventure no matter what. I had made it all that way, and I wasn't going to let anything stop me. So I decided to head into the city, walking through the muddy streets, I somehow ended up at a camp that was serving bacon, egg, and cheese sandwiches and coffee. And I can honestly say that the first bite changed my life all over again. From there, I went to visit the RV of the guy I had met the day before. When I got there, I met his friend who was also living there, and convinced them to come with me to the Human Car Wash. I have to admit that, by this point, I had only showered once, and it was absolutely imperative that I get some water and soap running over my body. The three of us went together and joined a bigger group of people. The easiest way to describe the experience is that you move through a series of stations, one by one. At the first station, everyone pours water on you. At the next, they scrub your entire body. Then they rinse you off, and finally, they dry you. So

you keep moving along, laughing and washing each other's bodies. I know it sounds super weird, but it was such a fun time. And then, finally, I was clean.

We walked naked under the sun, letting our bodies dry completely, and then headed to the sauna. Everything was getting better by the second. For the rest of the day and into the night, the sky remained clear, and the stars came out. Black Rock City at night turns into a completely different planet. All the art installations come alive with lights and technology, transforming into something entirely different from what you see during the day. So I went on a quest to discover all these sculptures and installations at night. And God, I was blown away by what I saw. The scale, the beauty, the compositions, and the emotions that the artists manage to provoke through what they build out there are so unexpected and deeply moving. After everything I had been through over the past few days, I found myself riding through the desert again, completely amazed by the beauty of it all.

On Saturday, the sun was out and the sky was clear. Absolutely perfect. After days of fighting the elements, I decided to stop fighting altogether. I left my bike behind, along with my belongings and my schedule, and wore nothing but a pair of tighty-whities, a gift from a stranger I'd met earlier that

morning after running the Naked Mile. Suddenly, an art car playing Whitney Houston passed by, and I hopped on. I rode through the city and around the playa, dancing with strangers who welcomed me as though we'd known each other for years. I had never felt more free or more alive. Eventually, I found my way to Bubbles and Bass, my favorite daytime party. I danced for hours, sharing smiles and moves with everyone around me. And somewhere in the middle of all that dancing, I realized something. I didn't need anything anymore. No time, no plans, no clothes, no alcohol. I've relied on all those things in the past to feel confident, outgoing, sexy, and cool; to navigate my life, my fears, and my insecurities. But this time, there I was, almost naked and sober in the middle of the desert, surrounded by strangers, feeling completely at ease with myself. And I realized that all those years of inner work had brought me to this moment. Everything we are and everything we desire already lies within us. We don't need something external to make us feel that way. Underwear Day will go down as one of the happiest days of my life. On Sunday, it was finally time to go and see the sunrise. I had been looking forward to it for days, but the weather hadn't allowed it. So I woke up really early and rode all the way out into deep playa to receive the sun on my own and have my own personal

ceremony. The sun came out over one of the most beautiful places in the world. And all I could feel was gratitude. Unconditional gratitude. I spent that morning riding around deep playa, admiring the art and the beautiful sculptures by Michael Benisty. Eventually, I decided to join one of the sunrise parties at Longfeng Artcar. It reminded me of the other times I had been to Burning Man, when I wouldn't miss dancing at sunrise at one of the big parties during the last days. However, this time, I just couldn't find myself vibing with it. I tried, but I couldn't make myself feel like this was a part of who I am anymore. I had to get away. I rode to the ashes of the Man, where I found people cooking eggs and bacon and handing out breakfast to everyone around the fire. Some people were sleeping, others were hanging out or dancing. Everything about that morning felt completely surreal and beautiful.

Sunday is the day when the Temple burns, and from past experiences, this had always been something I really looked forward to. However, the playa had other plans for me. Looking back, I feel there were so many similarities between this experience and an ayahuasca ceremony. Anyone who has been through something like that can probably understand the ups and downs, the roller coaster of emotions, the confusion, the visions, the joy, the love, but also the

struggles you need to go through and the emotional and physical toll that plant medicine can take on your body. By the afternoon, the purge was already on its way. I started feeling super sick. Everything was coming down on me. I was starting to feel like I could barely move. My tent was a mess, my living situation was very precarious, and my body was reflecting all of it. I started feeling as if all the emotional baggage I had left in the Temple, all the energy that needed to be released, was starting to move through my bones, through my organs, and through my flesh. The only thing I could think to do was reach out for help. That was one of the lessons I had learned just days before. I needed to be able to communicate what I needed from others. So I decided to look for my friends who were staying in an RV a few blocks away from me. Thankfully, they were home, and they welcomed me with so much kindness, warmth, and generosity. I can never thank them enough for what they did for me. They laid me down in bed. They fed me. They gave me medicine. They did everything they could to make me feel better.

I spent the rest of the day lying there, unable to join them to watch the Temple burn. My body was exploding. I was in so much pain that I started screaming. Through one of the windows of the RV, I could see the Temple burning. I could see the fire. And as the

flames grew stronger, so did the pain in my body. Somehow, I felt like I understood what was happening to me. It felt very clear that I was going through a powerful physical and emotional release, something I couldn't escape. So I decided to surrender. The same way you have to when you are going through something like this in a plant medicine ceremony. I surrendered, knowing that I would get through it and that, on the other side, I would feel lighter, happier, and freer. Not just for myself, but for everyone around me. And then something very strange happened. As the last flames of the Temple disappeared into the sky, I screamed one last time. And just like that, the pain was gone. I couldn't do anything else but fall asleep, completely tired and exhausted.

I was feeling a little better when I woke up on Monday. It's a strange feeling to watch the whole city being taken down. There's a mixture of sadness and melancholy that goes all the way through your body. This experience had already been so exhausting, both physically and emotionally, that all I wanted was to get out of there as fast as I could. The problem was that I couldn't. My car was completely dead. I kept trying to fix it with the help of the people around me, but nobody could figure out what was wrong. God, I just needed to get out of there. I had officially had enough. I was honestly about to lose it. But by then, another very important

lesson was already on its way. At some point, I realized that even though I was doing everything I could, this situation was completely out of my control. And when we find ourselves in a situation like this, the only thing we can really do is focus on the little things we can actually do something about, and trust that the things we can't control will somehow work themselves out. And so I did. I started packing up my belongings, cleaning my stuff, and making sure I left no trace behind. I took down my wrecked tent, packed everything into my car, and got myself completely ready to leave. I wanted to make sure that, whenever the car finally started working, there would be nothing left for me to do but drive away.

I tried to find help around the city, but it was almost impossible. Everyone was already leaving, and there was hardly anybody left who could help me. Thankfully, I found a couple of Rangers who were incredibly kind and told me they would help. They just didn't know when, because there was so much going on. So they put me on a list. God, I couldn't handle it anymore. I went back to my friends' RV, my playa angels, and decided to wait. Once again, they welcomed me with incredible kindness. They fed me, took care of me, and their beautiful souls somehow eased the wreck of mine.

It was already afternoon, and I was waiting in my car when the Rangers finally showed up. They tried to fix it, too, but they couldn't. We spent hours trying to figure out what was wrong, and eventually, they decided that the only option was to tow me out to the main road. Which, in itself, was still a pretty big problem. But there was nothing else I could do. Nothing I could control about the situation. So I decided to stop fighting it. To surrender. And once I did, a miracle happened. The car just started. I can't describe the peace and relief I felt in that moment. I just needed to get the fuck out of there. I was finally ready to leave. My RV friends and I decided to make our way out together. Normally, getting out of Black Rock City can take anywhere from five to ten hours, but I didn't care anymore. The car was working, and that was all that mattered. The Ranger had told me not to turn it off and to drive straight to Reno. Thankfully, I had enough gas to make it all the way there. And so we went. It only took us about three hours to get out, and everything went surprisingly smoothly. My RV friends and I stayed together the whole way. Someone put on some music, and a few of us climbed on top of the RVs for one last dance, watching the sun set over the playa.

After everything I had been through, there I was again, dancing under the desert sky. And as I watched the sun go down, I kept

thinking about what a crazy and beautiful adventure this had been. I was saying goodbye to a place where I had experienced the power of the elements so intensely. The wind, the earth, the rain, and finally, the fire that seemed to bring everything together. Somehow, I felt that all these forces of nature had been working on me throughout the entire experience. They had shaken me, pushed me to my limits, and washed away something I had been yearning to let go of for a very long time. It felt as if the last pieces of my past selves, the things I had been carrying without even realizing it, had finally been burned away and taken by the desert. And as the sun slowly disappeared behind the mountains, I felt I was leaving behind a version of myself that I no longer needed to carry. I could feel that my old self was finally gone, and that I was ready to welcome this new version of me. And God, it was one of the most beautiful feelings of my entire life.

A few hours later, we were finally on the road.

Back on this planet. And on our way to Reno.