



# The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the  
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

July 2023 - Volume 16 Issue 7

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## Feature Article

### The 2023 North Georgia Classic

By Tom Blake

I didn't take pictures, so close your eyes for a minute. Breathe in deeply. Hold. Exhale slowly. R-e-l-a-x.

Now, in your mind's eye, visualize riding at a spirited pace on well-maintained two-lane roads over mountains and hills, through gorges and valleys – meandering...undulating...gentle curves...left...right...uphill...downhill...tight curves...high speed sweepers...steep, look-over-your-shoulder 1st and 2nd gear switchbacks. And then the gorgeous mountain scenery –



forests...lakes...streams...rapids...fields...pastures...rock walls dripping water...waterfalls...narrow gorges...deep valleys...majestic distant ranges. Breathe in the cool, clean mountain air and fragrant spring scents.

Nice, huh?

Run through that one more time, slowly. See it. Feel it. Smell it. Let it sink in. It is the essence of why I go up there every year.

*So, the North Georgia Classic...*

It's the first regional MSTa street rally of the year occurring during the still cool 3rd weekend in April. It's centered in the far northeast corner of Georgia in the Blue Ridge Mountains with their unique offerings. And don't forget the familiar, welcoming MSTa faces and personalities. What could possibly be a better way to kick off the sport-touring rally year? And getting up there and back from Florida is still bearable - temperature and humidity-wise.

It's about 550 miles from my door which translates to about 9.5 hours of moving time and 11 hours total (I-95 to Jax and then secondary roads straight up). That's a slog, so I left a day early just in case. Doing 3-hour each way RTE's in Florida had given me confidence that I could still put in some long riding days. Turns out, I did the whole trip in one day and checked in early.

The NGC has historically been centered at Alpine village-like Helen. But this year they moved it a little further north and east to Dillard – less than 2 miles from the Georgia-North Carolina border. I think there was some dissatisfaction with the Quality Inn in Helen although it's right across the street from Betty's IGA. Betty's has excellent deli fare, excellent dollar coffees, beer, wine, groceries, outdoor seating, firepits and bar

and just about anything else you could need or want. Plus, Helen's many restaurants and shops are within easy walking distance.

Dillard, on the other hand, is very small, has few restaurant options and not much else of interest. But a good rate was negotiated at the Mountain Valley Inn. Unfortunately, when I called to make a reservation in mid-March, they were already full. So, I went with the Quality Inn in Helen. Betty's was the real draw.

My old riding buddy, Ken, had commitments and could not get over from the Winston-Salem, NC area until Thursday afternoon. No problem. I spent Thursday honing my sporty mountain riding skills. We then spent Friday, Saturday and Sunday burning up the area's roads – but in a kindly way.

I dropped in on the rally-goers in Dillard Saturday evening. We exchanged exaggerated stories, laughed a lot and a few of us walked across the highway (US 23/441) for supper. Then I had to head back to Helen and get packed up for the trek home. It didn't sound like the inn there was all that great of a place, either.

Going home on Monday, it started out very cool. Ran in and out of light drizzle a couple times in Georgia. Heavy rain in Florida, buckets full around Titusville. I was worn out when I got home, mainly I think, from the tension of doing the 3-hour, very congested, very high-speed I-95 section in the rain. Then, I was pretty much useless Tuesday - slumped in my recliner all day. But, thinking about those mountains – I just kept smiling from ear-to-ear...

Some fun facts taken from my BMW Motorrad Connected (GPS-enabling) phone app:

	Riding temps	Elevations	Elev Change	Max Lean Angles		Mileage	Farthest Pt. from Helen
Wed.	63 – 90	-221 to 1,447	1668	24L	29R	548	
Thurs.	63 – 88 <sup>1</sup>	1,314 to 3,999	2685	44L	41R	189	Highlands, NC
Fri.	61 – 72	1,252 to 5,241	3989	44L	45R	277	Waynesville, NC
Sat.	42 <sup>2</sup> – 67	765 to 5,274	4509	39L	42R	298	Tellico Plains, TN
Sun.	54 – 65	1,252 to 3,877	2625	44L	40R	266	Hiwassee Dam, NC
Mon.	48 – 77	-125 to 1,459	1584	28L	26R	552	

<sup>1</sup> It warmed up early this year, and everything was nice and green for a change.

<sup>2</sup> It cooled down Friday afternoon, and then rain moved through early Saturday morning. Low temp was up on the Cherohala Skyway.

–Tom

## *Safety Talk*

**IMPORTANT NOTICES:** *Ultimately, the safety of motorcycle riders and their passengers is their own responsibility. Nothing presented in the column supersedes, negates or relieves a motorcyclist and/or passenger from assumption of personal responsibility for their actions and safety. [Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the August 2017 FLMSTA Gator Tale.]*

### **Florida Summer = Rain**

***By Doug Westly***



Yep, it's here...the rainy season. I was riding home from my local shop just the other day and it happened. I had beautiful sunny weather for the rider to the dealer, and was there about 20 minutes. I walked out to my bike and the storm clouds were already gathering. During the 12-mile ride back home, it was in succession sunny, cloudy, dark, drizzle, pouring rain, wet roads with standing water, then bright and sunny again. Welcome to Florida in the summertime.

We could spend an entire afternoon telling war stories about Florida rain. What I would like to pass along here are what I think are the most critical parts of this enduring FL summer riding malady:

Rule 1: It's going to rain. Accept it and just think of it as a way to cool off. The best part is seeing the riders trying to ride in the pouring downpour; those that aren't wearing a helmet or gear.

Rule 1a: When you pass them, make sure you wave...

Rule 2: When the roads first get wet, the water pushes all the oil to the top. The roads get SLICK. Be super careful. (If you can) Turn up the traction control. Turn down the power delivery. Stay out of the lane centers where all the oil and grease accumulates.

Rule 3: Increase your following distance. Enough said.

Rule 4: Watch out for the crazy cage drivers. A lot of them have no clue what reduced traction on wet roads even means.

Rule 5: Watch the clouds: Dark is bad. Black is worse. I've changed directions more than once to avoid the oncoming Black Wall of Death.

Rule 6: A GPS with weather radar is worth its weight in, well at least silver. It can tell you which storm fronts you can ride through, and when you need to apply Rule 5, above.

Rule 7: Rain is one thing. When you start hearing thunder, that's something else. I once had a bolt hit the tree I was riding by at the time. The concussion pushed me almost off the road. And that one didn't even hit me. Avoid noisy storms when at all possible!

Rule 8: Want to avoid all the rain? Ride in the early mornings.

Rule 9: Rule 8 doesn't always work...

Rule 10: Riding in the FL summer rain is an exercise in caution. Focus on your riding techniques, traction, traffic awareness, etc. If it gets too bad, seek refuge. Chances are the weather will change in 5 minutes anyway.

Year-round riding is one of the reasons we all live in this awesome state. With it comes a few challenges, one of them being the summer rains. Take it in stride, make sure you realize the safety precautions required when the raindrops start to fall, and ensure you always Ride Safe!

***Ride safe!*** – Doug Westly



## South Director's Report

### Welcome to summer in Florida...

The solstice has passed, and I don't think we are in drought conditions anymore!!

Hot and sticky are the rules of the day, and they seem to have had an effect on our brunch ride turnouts. Only 13 riders attended our 3 events! And two of them were repeats on two of the rides!! We hope that more of you will acclimate by July and August, and we'll see more smiling faces in the near future! We're bouncing some ideas around to enhance our events, stay tuned...



*Southies enjoyed a beautiful morning's ride.*



*Great service and delicious food at Marsh Landing*

The South Brunch Ride made its way north to Marsh Landing in Fellsmere the first weekend of June. Three of us left the Shell station and enjoyed a beautiful morning's ride through the middle of the state. We were joined by three more stalwarts from the East Central area and enjoyed ourselves in our own private dining area. As usual, the service was great and the food was delicious. All this "goodness" was complemented by tales of first bikes, on-the-road stories, and camping vs hotels...AND we all made it home before the predictable storms!!

Of course, June is also STAR '23 month, so the East and West Brunch Rides were scheduled for the last opportunity afterward. We usually avoid doubling up on one Saturday, but felt the locations were spread out enough to make sure anyone could make the ride of their choice. Tom and Doug's reports are below.

As for STAR '23, look for a full report next month!! I'm hoping to have contributions from the attendees to share with all of you. Teaser here... great weather, great routes, lots of fun!!

### What's Next??

We have three rides again in July. On the 8th, join the East Central riders for a Brunch Ride to Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House in Oak Hill. Two weeks later, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Southies head to a new-to-us location, the Wild Turkey Tavern in Avon Park. A week later, July 29<sup>th</sup>, the West Central Brunch Ride lands at the Yalaha Bakery, in Yalaha! Come out for some fun and frolic!



## Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

THANKS to Don Moe for his efforts EVERY month to bring our Florida membership up to date with all the news about our new and renewing members!!

### Here's what we know today...

We welcome three new FLMSTA members this month: **James Bosco** of Edgewater, **John Graham** of Ponte Vedra Beach, and **Nate Laney** of The Villages. Welcome!

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Jeffrey Withrow

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Dell Haverland      Kim Krzywicki      Bill McDaniel      Robert Miller      Kendra Semenick  
Lynn Treischmann      Tom Treischmann

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the membership committee at [membership@ridemsta.com](mailto:membership@ridemsta.com). Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at [PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew](https://PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew) or [PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin](https://PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin) respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden**, **11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, and not to the address of any prior membership director.

If you only want to update your phone, email, bikes, or other details, you can do so quickly via [PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate](https://PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate). **Please include enough unchanging information to assure the correct member is updated in the database.**

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our brand-new **Invitation-To-Ride Tri-folds!** For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle touring package drawing at our next STAR event.** Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term.

## Random Ramblings!!

We have lots of BRUNCH rides for the next several months. With 3 rides a month, you have plenty of chances to invite a friend along and introduce them to our group!! More ITRs are available now...

We will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

We've had a terrific year sharing good grub and lots of great gab!! Our new personnel are making 2023 even more better... 😊

Hoping you're living the life you love, and loving the life you live...

*When you can...*

*Join one of our monthly rides!!*

*And invite a friend to ride along!!*

*Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!*

**ATGATT Van**

**MSTA Florida State Director**



## East-Central Ride – Osteen Diner, Osteen, FL – Tom Blake



After a rainy week or two, we finally caught a break Saturday morning (24<sup>th</sup>) - lots of blue skies, relatively low humidity and temperatures in the low 80's. Until 11 that is. Then, it heated up to near 90° for the ride home. Oh well, that's just how late June is in central Florida! But no r-a-i-n. That would come late in the day after all the riding was done.

The other good and bad news is that we didn't have any trouble getting everyone seated on time. In fact Alan and I walked into the Osteen Diner in Osteen about 9:20 and found a 4-spot table on our own (just in case anyone else showed up). They didn't. So we sat and talked about books, and Buell's, and babes, and bike rallies, and I don't know what all.

The coffee showed up promptly. And once we finally figured out what we wanted, it seemed to take mere seconds for food to show up. My bacon and cheddar omelet was delicious, and the coffee was pretty good, too. So was the wheat toast, come to think of it think of it. Almost everyone knows what Alan and I look like so no pictures. But in case you forgot, he's the one with the long, dark, knarly, wild hair!

So, in two weeks we get to do it all over again – hopefully with a nicer turnout – Goodrich's Seafood in Oak Hill on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Hope to see all you trepid summertime riders there!



*Great, fast service at Breakfast Station in Brooksville*

## West Central Brunch Ride – Breakfast Station, Brooksville, FL – Doug Westly

We had great weather for the West Central Brunch Ride. With the simultaneous east and west brunch rides, attendance was just five of us, but the weather was beautiful to be out and about. We gathered at the Breakfast Station in Brooksville, where the manager and staff went out of their way to make us feel welcome. The table was set and waiting when we arrived. Great, fast service even though they were busy, with every table filled.

The closest rider was only 2 miles from home. The rider coming the farthest left his house at 7 am and got to the restaurant at 9 am, all on backroads. There's beautiful riding in the Brooksville area if you haven't tried the roads here. On any nice Saturday or Sunday morning, there may be 50-100 bikes at the Speedway east of Brooksville, at State Rd 50 and Spring Lake Highway.

Next month, Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, we'll be heading to Yahala Bakery, so make plans to join us!



*Beautiful riding in the Brooksville area with great weather*

## **Florida Rides This Month**

Always remember to check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) and/or your email for updates on scheduled rides. Changes in times, dates, and especially locations are often out of our control and with short notice.

### **MSTA Florida East Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **July 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House**, 253 River Rd., **Oak Hill, FL** ☎ (386) 345-3397 ([map](#))

Description: Here we go again to one of our favorite places. There are great views out across Mosquito Lagoon. The food is good. Prices are reasonable. Bring along something for under the kickstand, paved parking is very limited.

Contact: Tom, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎ (321) 794-6147

### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Wild Turkey Tavern**, 2751 US Hwy 27 S, **Avon Park, FL** ☎ (863) 452-5284 ([map](#))

Description: New-to-us destination that looks too good to pass up!

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

### **MSTA Florida West Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **July 29<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Yalaha Bakery**, 8210 FL-48, **Yalaha, FL** ☎ (352) 324-3366 ([map](#))

Description: From the pictures of this place, you'd better bring your appetite!! You'll want one of everything they offer!! And, I'd wouldn't be surprised if some East Siders join in the fun!

Contact: Doug, [flwingrdr@msn.com](mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com), or ☎ (813) 928-1663

## **Future Florida Rides**

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) for any updates.

### **MSTA Florida East Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **August 5<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q**, 552 W King St., **Cocoa, FL** ☎ (407) 323-6469 ([map](#))

Description: This is a new place for us, but I've eaten there many times. It's your basic, old-fashioned BBQ place but kept up to date and clean. They know how to make good, reasonably priced breakfasts. It's also very accessible with plenty of paved parking.

Contact: Tom, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎ (321) 794-6147

### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **August 19<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Big V Restaurant**, 32 Hall St., **LaBelle, FL** ☎ (863) 675-2917 ([map](#))

Description: It's been years since we ventured here. Looks like they spruced it up and kept the prices reasonable!

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

### **MSTA Florida West Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, **August 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Sunrise Eatery**, 5883 Gall Blvd., **Zephyrhills, FL** ☎ (813) 782-0401 ([map](#))

Description: Oh my, another new-to-us destination! And you might want to save some room for an ice cream sundae or chill your eggs with a milkshake!

Contact: Doug, [flwingrdr@msn.com](mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com), or ☎ (813) 928-1663

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page. The Florida MSTA chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos: [click here](#).

## **Florida MSTA Apparel**



As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to [mstaflorida.qbstores.com](http://mstaflorida.qbstores.com). We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!! They offer both embroidery and digital print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!! Shopping finds online... We found some fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for



this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts>.

These MSTA websites have extensive event information:

***National MSTA*** [RideMSTA.com](http://RideMSTA.com)    ***SE Regional MSTA*** [MSTA-SE.com](http://MSTA-SE.com)    ***Florida MSTA*** [FLMSTA.org](http://FLMSTA.org)

We're also on Facebook: [facebook.com/FLMSTA/](https://facebook.com/FLMSTA/)

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## **Classified Ads**

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org). Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!