



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 10 Issue 4

Events in April 2017

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Feature Article

The North Georgia Classic in Helen

What to Expect - Places to Go

By Tom Blake

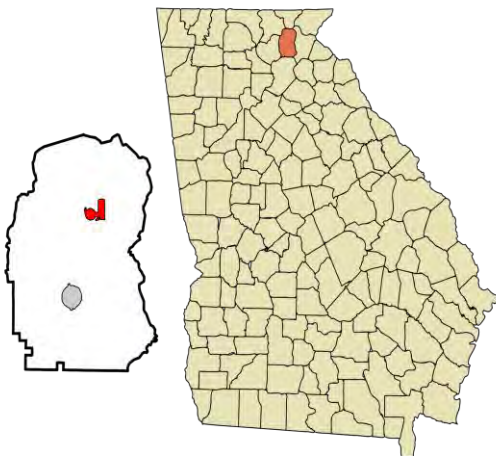
[Ed: Although some portions of this article have previously appeared in the 2/2013, 7/2015 and 6/2016 editions of this newsletter, Tom has rewritten the content for publication here to encourage our readers to attend the North Georgia Classic Just-For-Fun event in April, 2017. Photos and maps by author except as noted.]

The NGC is coming up April 21 – 23, 2017 in [Helen](#), Georgia. There's no registration. You don't even need to be an MSTAs member. It's one of the best Friday thru Sunday rider get-togethers going in one of the best riding areas in the SE. And I encourage you to consider going.

For event details go to: msta-se.com/helen/

I typically arrive at the host hotel late on Thursday afternoon. By dinner time, several riders are on hand. Motorcycling stories get into high gear in the parking lot and we decide to walk a short distance downtown for food and a libation or three. The next morning I'm are

up and fed in no big hurry. Days start slowly in the mountains. By 8:30 or 9:00 the temperature is up to about 50 and those undulating and curvaceous mountain roadways are beginning to strongly beckon.



Unlike in Florida, there are excellent ride options in almost every direction. But, given the short duration of the event, I've whittled down a long list of possibilities to what I consider the top tier of rides to recommend along with some to and from options. I admit that I can be a bit of an adrenaline junky at times and each of these rides can feed that addiction. But they can be equally enjoyable at whatever pace you feel comfortable with.

My list includes 1) [Wayah Rd](#) to the [Nantahala Outdoor Center](#) (NOC) and lunch at the [River's End Restaurant](#); 2) the [Cherohala Skyway](#); 3) [Tail of the Dragon](#); 4) US 60 between Morganton and Suches; 5) [GA 180](#); 6) US 129 over [Blood Mountain](#); and 7) the [Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway](#). You can't do all of them in a single day. And you may not want to run them in the order presented nor in the direction described. So pick and choose, mix and match or do your own route planning. You really can't go far wrong.

Item #1 is lunch at the Rivers End Restaurant at the NOC in NC and going by way of Wayah Rd promises a good challenge. I like to include US 76 between Hiwassee and Clayton early on because it's an excellent highway to begin re-adjusting your mind and muscle memory to mountain riding... getting into the *rhythm of the mountains* I like to call it.

The quickest way to 76 is to take GA 17 north over the mountain. It's plenty twisty and steep with its share of tar snakes so you may want to take it easy the first time over. A more laid back alternative is to turn right on GA 356 from just north of Helen past [Unicoi State Park](#). Go left at the stop sign and then go left on GA 197 past [Lake Burton](#) to 76.

Either way, this is when I begin thinking in earnest about, and practicing, all the details related to somewhat aggressive cornering. It takes a while to knock the rust off. Basic tenets are not entering a curve too fast and lane position to maximize sight distance through blind curves in order to spot hazards and obstacles in time to deal with them.

At Clayton, turn north on US 23/441 toward Franklin, NC and then take US 64 west. Access Wayah Rd from US 64 about 4 miles west of 441. The road meanders past an LBJ Jobs Corp campus, climbs steeply up the mountain and then descends past very picturesque [Nantahala Lake](#) and onward to US 19/74 in the [Nantahala Gorge](#). Then take 19 east about 8 miles along the river to the NOC. Estimate about 3 hours plus breaks for the whole journey.



Wayah Road to US 19/74 and the Nantahala Outdoor Center

Wayah is a good workout with plenty of second gear switchbacks, dips, climbs and twists.

Downstream of the lake, it also has some abrupt turns onto bridges that come into view suddenly – not a time to be carrying too much speed. And not all of the pavement is in the greatest condition. It's not by any means a dangerous ride but it is prudent to ride a bit conservatively and stay alert. By contrast, the ride along the Nantahala River in the gorge is utterly relaxing as you meander along the river's rapids.



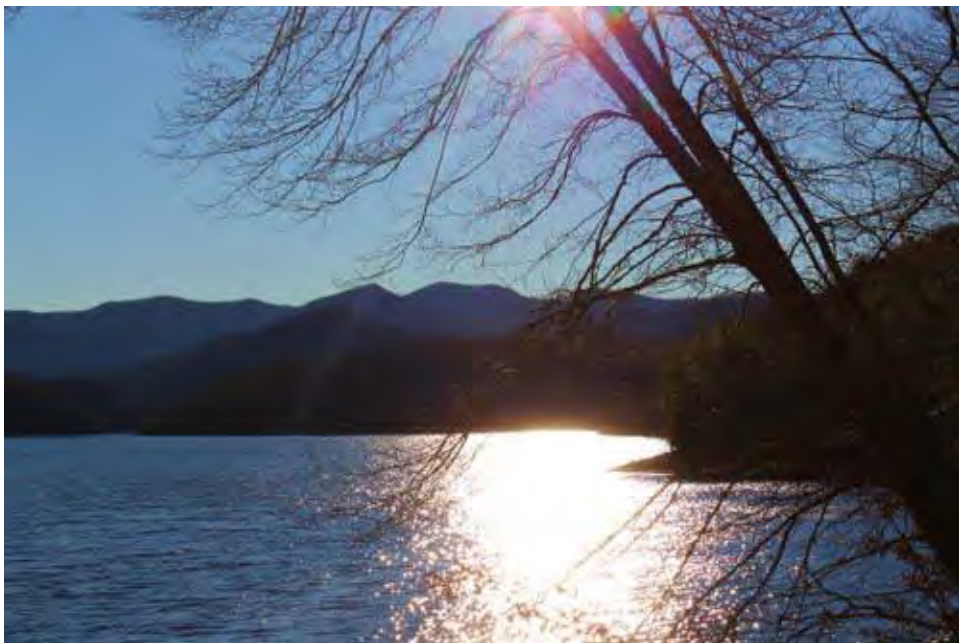
On Wayah Road before heading up the mountain

(Photo: Google Earth)



One of the many switchbacks along Wayah Road

(Photo: Google Earth)



Sunset on Nantahala Lake



US 19 along the Nantahala River

(Photo: Google Earth)

The Nantahala Outdoor Center's setting is picturesque and inviting. In fact, this is one of my favorite places in the world. After a hearty and warming lunch at the River's End Restaurant overlooking the river, I usually pop in next door to the well-stocked outdoor gear and apparel store for a quick look-see. Then walk over the foot bridge and down by the water to soak in a bit of the place's tranquility.

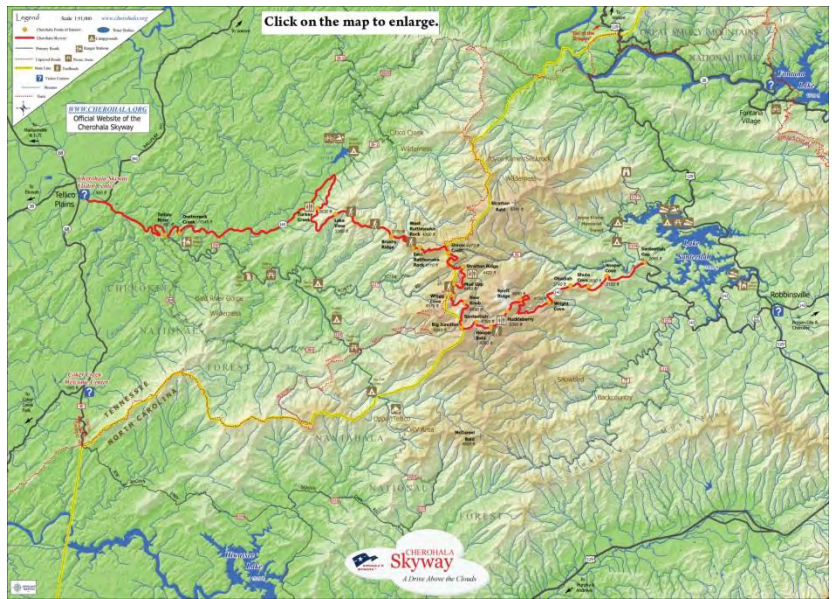


The Nantahala River and Outdoor Center

Restaurant is in right, foreground; the outdoor store is beyond the foot bridge on the right

That done, some may want to head for the Cherohala Skyway. This is one of the most exhilarating rides in the eastern US. To get there, point your bike west on 19 and as you come up out of the gorge, turn right on US 129 and head for Robbinsville. Just a little north of town, turn west on NC 143 and you will soon be on the Skyway.

The Robbinsville end of 143 is very technical. But then it opens up and allows you to build good speed as you ascend the mountain. Depending upon conditions, you may ride up into a cloud and then come out into clear skies near the summit. The route number changes to TN 165 as you descend into Tellico Plains. From Robbinsville to Tellico plains there is close to 50 miles of superb tarmac and stunning views.



Map of the Cherohala Skyway

(Map: Cherohala.org)



On the Cherohala Skyway

(Photo: Internet)



More Cherohala Skyway

(Photos: Google Earth)

Most of the Skyway allows cornering at good speed. There are numerous pull outs for great views although, truthfully, you may be having too much fun to stop. In Tellico Plains, take a break and gas up, if necessary, at either of the convenience stores. Other smiling riders are usually there and anxious to share stories.



You have options for leaving (or getting to) Tellico Plains. One is the Skyway, of course. A second is to head south on 68 and then GA 60 – perhaps all the way through Suches, GA via Copperhill and Morganton (described below). Or a third is to take 68 south to TN 123 which becomes GA 294 which takes you to US 64 west of Murphy – a very fun ride.

A fourth option, if you have time, is to go north and east through the Tail of the Dragon and then back south on US 28. Do the Dragon on a weekday, if possible. It's crowded on weekends - including, now, the sports car crowd who don't seem to mind crossing centerlines in blind curves. It is also heavily patrolled on weekends.

For the Dragon, head east on TN 165 about a mile. Turn north on TN 360 which squiggles along Tellico Lake to US 411. Turn right on 411 just under three miles to TN 72. Turn southeast on 72 which roughly follows the eastern side of Tellico Lake until you T-bone into US 129. All very pleasant. Turn right on 129 as it meanders along the north side of Chilhowee Lake and then the southwest edge of the [Great Smokey Mountain National Park](#). The climax is the Tail of the Dragon's 318 curves in 11 miles to [Deal's Gap](#). Lots of braking, puckering, downshifting, looking over your shoulder to see where the road goes (or went!), cornering, accelerating and upshifting! And roadside picture takers are out for a buck.

After the obligatory stop and perhaps food or fuel at Deal's Gap, turn east on US 28. You will find 28 has all you could want in a mountain highway. Follow it across [Fontana Dam](#) and all the way to US 19/74 (only a few miles east of the NOC). Just keep an eye out for the Swain County deputy. Turn east on 19 about 4 miles and then south on 28 again at the gas station. This becomes extremely (but pleasantly) gnarly for a ways and finally comes into Franklin, NC where you can hop on US23/441 south into GA. Or a little below Franklin, hop on US 64 west over the mountain and then south on Hwy 175 into Hiawassee. Estimate 3 hours plus break time.

GA 60 between Morganton and Suches is an experience you just don't want to miss. The road surface is good and you can carry good speed. I love this road! It is exciting from end to end. The northern section nearer Morganton has some excellent higher speed sweepers. The center area meanders through pictorial meadows and farmland. In the mountain approaching Suches things tighten up. It has everything and is on my 'to do' list every time I'm in the area. In fact, it's so much fun that I usually ride it multiple times.



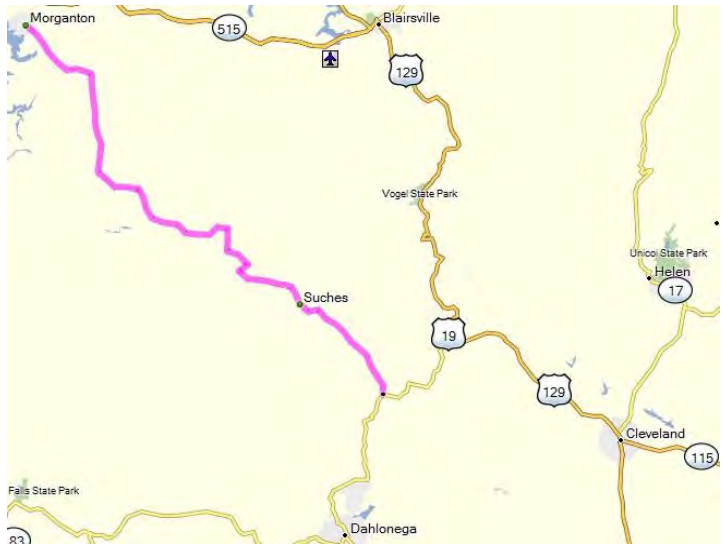
Even more Skyway

(Photos: Internet)



Tellico Plains, TN to Franklin, NC via the Dragon, Deal's Gap and Fontana Dam

There is one decreasing radius curve to warn you about. It's a right-hander if you're heading north, with a side road joining it mid-curve from the west. It's about two-thirds of the way up from Suches. I was carrying good speed through that sucker one day when a pickup heading south popped into view mid-curve. Fortunately, the pickup stayed in its lane. I was so focused on my line that I didn't flinch and to accommodate the tightening curve, I had the presence of mind to lean even further over by pressing on the right handgrip. Close! I noticed a big gouge in the pavement where someone wasn't so fortunate.



GA 60 from Morganton through Suches to US 19 above Dahlonega

Suches is most notably known to motorcyclists as the location of the old Two Wheels Only (TWO) campground and the western terminus of GA 180. [Two Wheels of Suches](#) is the rebirth of TWO under new ownership. There's usually a crowd of motorcyclists around - either camping, eating or just taking a break and enjoying the mountain air. Gas is available at the convenience store across the street.



Two Wheels of Suches before the redo

(Photo: Google Earth)

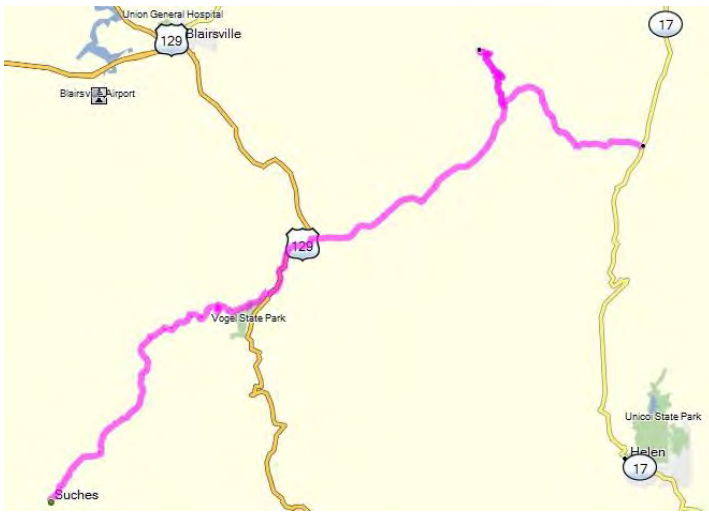
From Suches, you can head south on 60 to US 19, take GA 180 east (see below) or go north toward Morganton or perhaps even on up to Tellico Plains. 60 south is an entertaining road - a paradise of twists and turns. The views off the mountain are spectacular if you are of a mind to peek. Then turn left on 19 to access US 129 and attack Blood Mountain (also below) or to head to Helen by way of Cleveland. Or go right to Dahlonega, a small college town with a gold mining past and a variety of interesting shops and eateries in the town square.



GA 60 south of Suches

(Photo: Google Earth)

GA 180 is another good ride. It's called Wolf Pen Gap Rd between Suches and US 129 adjacent [Vogel State Park](#). The section near Vogel is steep and gnarly and will demand your attention. The eastern and western sections of 180 overlap US 129 for a couple miles in the middle. The eastern end starts (or ends) at US 17 south of Hiawassee (over the mountain north of Helen). The 180 Spur to [Brasstown Bald](#) runs north from the eastern section of 180.



GA 180 between Suches and GA 17, and the 180 Spur (north) to Brasstown Bald



On 60 looking north to the 180 cutoff and the convenience store (Photo: Google Earth)

Brasstown Bald is the highest point in GA and the visitor center can be accessed via the very steep and squiggly 180 Spur to the north. There's an observatory at the summit with great views outside and local history exhibits inside. It's said that on a clear day you can see Atlanta from up there.

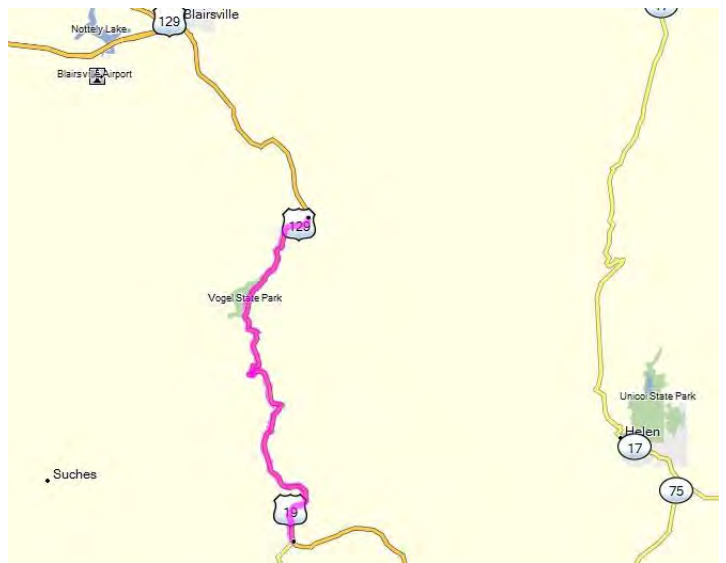


Wolf Pen Gap Road (GA 180) on the mountain above Vogel Park (Photo: Internet)



Brasstown Bald Observatory (Photo: Google Earth)

US 129 over Blood Mountain is great fun. It's steep and curvy including numerous lower gear switchbacks. On weekends, there's always a crowd of motorcyclists on it so it's also patrolled. Up at the summit, the Appalachian (hiking) Trail (remember *A Walk in the Woods* with Redman and Nolte) crosses 129 running right through [Neel's Gap Store](#) which has a good selection hiking gear and apparel and other interesting goods. The tree in front, amusingly, has hundreds of discarded hiking boots dangling by their laces from its limbs. Access Blood Mountain on the north end from



US 129 over Blood Mountain – 180 to 60 highlighted

Blairsville or from GA 180 where it intersects 129. From the south come through Dahlonega, with its gold mining history, Cleveland or Suches.



Front of Neel's Gap Store



Hiking trail approaching from the east

Now finally, the icing on the riding cake -- the [Richard B. Russel Scenic Highway](#), aka GA 348. It is just thrilling! While only about 14 miles long, it's the perfect exclamation point to a great day of mountain riding. I prefer to run it west to east because the eastern descent out of the mountain has an excellent road surface and is just an incredible succession of fast sweepers – one after another – all the way to the bottom of that glorious mountain. **What a rush!** Access it south of Blairsville from GA 180 about a mile east of US 129. It terminates at GA 75 ALT just west of Helen.



GA 348 – the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway



Descending the Richard B Russell Scenic Highway (Photo: Don Moe)
That little spec of yellow w-a-y out ahead is yours truly.

I do live to challenge curves. But for me, it's all about technique, concentration, precision and smoothness - not reckless speed.

DO BE AWARE: All of these roads are also a bonanza to fitness-minded bicyclists. Be prepared to meet them anywhere including mid-turn. Same for loose stones, fallen rocks and trees, animals and vehicles crossing centerline. Also, I'm not a big fan of dusk, night or dawn riding up there either, because of deer and other critters.

So back in *Alpine* Helen now... it's time to get to the hotel, put the bike to bed, change into street clothes and begin the tall tales in the parking lot. Continue with friends over dinner at a nice restaurant in town and wash it all down with your favorite elixirs. Then back to the hotel for more camaraderie. And finally, to bed.

Final notes on the North Georgia Classic in Helen... if you are a fan of mountain riding, that general area is arguably the best place to ride in the southeastern US. April is the perfect time of year to be there if you don't



The Quality Inn host hotel with recently refreshed rooms



Downtown scenes



mind that the vegetation hasn't greened up yet. Winter temperatures are moderating but still cool. It's too early yet for the crowds that make driving through towns impossible and out on the highways maddening. Helen is a small community, so walking to and from a variety of decent restaurants, watering holes and other attractions is easy.

The only downside is that April can also be unpredictable weather-wise. 2016 was perfect – no rain, no fog, cool mornings, lower 70's by afternoon. 2015 was just a little cooler daytime due to the overcast. Rain threatened but did not impact riding. The forecasts did not look good out ahead of the event. It was a last-minute decision on my part to go. And it was a good decision because we had a great time. My recommendation, therefore, is to book early (just make sure you can cancel, if necessary) and keep an eye on the forecasts. Forecasts do change as the target dates get closer. So don't panic and cancel early. Make your final decision the day before you plan to leave home.

Officially, the event runs Friday thru Sunday. For me though, it's about an 11-hour slog up and back. I love mountains and mountain riding and want to make the most of it. So, I prefer going up Thursday and coming home Monday. But, whatever works for you. I'm looking forward to the 2017 NGC – weather permitting. Hope to see **you** there, too.

Guten Tag,

Tom Blake

SAFETY TALK

IMPORTANT NOTICE: *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.*

Safety and the Road Less Traveled

Just yesterday Becky and I were in the truck. So you want to go do a little ADV riding? Nothing serious, you just wonder what is down those dirt roads that you always speed by. Here are some thoughts on safety if you ever decide to take that left or right turn onto the dirt/sand/gravel road.

First rule of thumb: Traction, traction, traction. Street tires aren't made for off-pavement adventures. They aren't made to grip the soft surface and if your off-road path is anything more than hard pack gravel or dirt, you're asking gravity to take over.

Heavy bikes don't work well off-road in Florida. All of Florida is a beach; it just depends on how far you are from the ocean. That means unless you are up in the Panhandle, you're riding on sand. Heavy bikes sink in this stuff, so unless the road or trail under you is hard pack, be extremely careful. For our off-road riding conditions, simple, lightweight ADV bikes work far better than the latest heavy-weight, monster-powered ADV wonders. You don't need power, you need traction and maneuverability. Besides that, it means you can pick it back up by yourself, when you discover just how soft our sand can be.

If you're going to ride off-pavement, and especially if you are by yourself, repair (both you and the bike) and safety equipment are critical. As a minimum, basic tools, a tire repair kit with inflator, a good first aid kit, and a way to call for help should be your minimum standards. Particularly if you are by yourself, consider carrying a SPOT transmitter. This should be on your person, NOT mounted to the bike.

Be aware of changing surface conditions if you venture off the pavement. A gravel road can change to hard pack or soft sand almost instantly.

A few quick riding techniques to help out...

- 🏍️ Watch for changing surface conditions by changes in the surface colors, undulations in the path, puddles, and even the tracks made by other vehicles.
- 🏍️ If you get into soft sand, push your weight back on the bike, allowing the front end to lighten and ride up or float on top of the sand. Be very careful about your front brake in reduced traction conditions. Getting your front tire turned in soft sand will almost guarantee a front-end tuck and gravity taking over.



"You don't need the latest high HP ADV wonder bike and/or spend a lot of bucks to do a little off-road wandering. The Author's choice of lightweight ADV bike, a [Honda CB500X](#) with ABS, simply equipped with a rugged top case, crash bars, a good skid plate, secure mounting for a cell phone, and Dunlop Trailmax tires for on and off-road use. Find what works for the kind of riding you want to do."

- 🏍️ Even on hard pack and gravel, your front end will want to wander. Let it and stay loose on the handlebars, guiding the front end in a straight line, but don't fight the little front-end wandering.
- 🏍️ In deep sand, find the passable rut and use it, as long as it isn't too deep. Sometimes riding all the way on the path's shoulder will find you some harder ground.
- 🏍️ If you don't know how deep the puddle is, don't try it! There is a big difference between a 6 inch hole and a 2 foot hole.
- 🏍️ As the path gets worse and if you're not sure about your skills or your bike's capabilities, TURN AROUND. Bruising your ego is a lot less painful than bruising or breaking your body or bike!
- 🏍️ IMPORTANT (for all riding): Let somebody know where you're going, and establish check-in times and procedures.

Finally, once you do venture off-road, you're going to find a whole new world for two wheels. If you get the bug, find an off-road riding course. You'll be surprised how fast you can adapt, and how much fun the off-road world really is out there!

Ride Safe!

Doug Westly – Safety Editor
radmoto@hotmail.com

Florida News

South Director's Report

SO, HOW MANY INCHES OF SNOW DID YOU HAVE TO SHOVEL THIS MONTH?

Come on, man... We were too busy riding over hill and dale, all month long!!

This is getting to be too easy... Spring sprung down here, and we hardly noticed the difference!! Ahh, we just keep rolling along. And this month, we rolled every week! We had a little hiccup the first weekend of March, when we relocated the destination for the Central Lunch Ride. A trusted scout made sure we had a winner. However, just two members of our Central Gang made their way to the [Jolly Gator Fish Camp](#) in Geneva despite the perfect weather for a ride.

The next weekend, we held our Daytona Just-For-Fun Event in Ocala!! At the dawn of Bike Week, some 12-15 members and friends gathered for... wait for it... FUN!! We had riders coming and going, so I never did figure out how many smiling faces enjoyed the weekend! The hotel worked out fine. Be sure to take our accommodation promotions seriously. They were sold out all weekend!! Though we had a half a dozen restaurants within walking distance, the happy hour at Ruby Tuesday's could not be refused!! Oh, and the dinner options were terrific as well!! Did I mention it was the closest place to the hotel... A triple threat that was undeniable!



Our big group for Friday's dinner at Ruby Tuesday's

(Photo: Jim Park)

A BIG THANKS to Jim Park, who worked his Garmin magic and entertained two group rides. The Friday ride took the crew through hill and dale. The Saturday ride took us on a trip through 20th Century history in Central Florida!! It was a "new-to-me" day, all day!! Check out the photos on the MSTA National site, Just-For-Fun Events, Daytona Bike Week-Ocala!! (msta.smugmug.com/Jff/2017-Daytona-Bike-Week-Ocala/i-VTLsS74)

It was right back to Daytona/DeLand the following Thursday, as the FL MSTA hosted the usual Daytona Lunch Ride! We picked a new place, closer to the track and vendors. The photos of the bundled up riders indicate that the ample inside dining area at [Brian's BBQ](#) was well received. Go figure, our lunch ride happened on one of the coldest days we've had in five months... See Teresa's report below; check out the pics on our site!!

To round out the end of the month, the South Lunch Ride returned to an old favorite, but in a brand new location!! We made our way to [Lightsey's Fish Co.](#), now located in the south end of Okeechobee City. We had a blast!! They put us outside in their screened in patio, which would hold 50+! As the temps and breeze were perfect, we could have stayed all afternoon! The food and service were top notch, and everyone agreed that a return visit would be in order!! We had a new-to-the-Southies member join us for lunch from the Central Gang, Keith Harrison! He took long-distance rider honors as well!! With 17 of us in attendance, our 50/50 raffle was huge! In part to Don Williams' participation, our pot grew to \$72. Then, Don held the winning ticket!! Then, Don graciously donated his half back to the Club!! What a guy! That brings our total to \$1080.50. As we do every year, we paid for our website domain cost this month. Subtracting \$40.50 leaves us at \$1040.00

What's Next??

As I promoted last month, we have our RTE dates set for the whole of 2017!! Realize that nothing is set in stone, and we have already moved an April date to accommodate the popular [North Georgia Classic](#). So, be sure to check our RIDES calendar often to insure you never miss one of our events!!

First up, the Central Gang makes their way to [JB Boondocks](#) on 704 S Lakeshore Blvd, in Howey-In-The-Hills. We have loved this place for years! Be there on April 8th for a Noon time lunch date!! The very next weekend, the Southies head to a new-to-us location! Be at [Woody's River Roo Pub & Grill](#), on 5717 18th St. East, in Ellenton. One of our trusted scouts sent his recommendation along a while back. How can we miss with a water front table and good food?!?!?

For those looking to put some real miles on their ride, the North Georgia Classic takes place from April 21-23. Check out our website for ALL the details!! There are links, phone numbers, hotel info, Forum discussions..... Make your reservations now!! *[Ed: Read Tom Blake's [article](#) in this issue about the riding in that area!]*

Membership News

I'll say this one more time... My heartfelt 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!! Don is part of a multi-member team nationwide who have stepped up to wrestle the membership rolls into a lean, mean, manageable process!! Believe me, they took on a hydra-headed monster and seem to have tamed the beast down to a human-friendly Pitbull!!

Here's what we know today...

In March, we had no new members join the MSTA from Florida. Looks like we need to spread around a new batch of our Invitation-To-Ride quad-folds!! Remember that for each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a \$10 STARBUcks coupon that you can use towards event registration fees and membership dues, as well as Gear Box items when it is reestablished.

We thank the following Florida members for recently renewing their memberships:

Frederick Christ David & Leslie Noyes

These Florida memberships have expired since January 1st:

Clifford Burke Frances Headrick Howard Jacobson Ken & JoAnna Murray

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and to continue supporting their MSTA.

Special Announcement!

We now have a link for our Florida State Storefront!! Go to 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. And now, they can offer us T-shirts with pockets!!

Random Ramblings!

I have had great fun these past few months riding around Florida with friends and members and new faces!!

Be looking for some new lunch and/or brunch locations in the coming months...

We have so much fun planned for the rest of the year!! If you've never ventured to one of our events, consider changing that lapse real soon!! My first STAR was in Avon, CO. I rode with a great buddy from Reno, NV after shipping my 'Busa from Florida. That was in 2006... My first event in Florida was a Lunch ride to Okeechobee. I rode solo. That was in 2001... My first event ever was a Lunch ride in Connecticut. I rode solo. That was 1990... Try it, YOU'LL LIKE IT!

YOU ARE PLANNING ON ATTENDING [STAR 2017 IN COLORADO](#) (PDF), RIGHT??? The links for registration and the raffle bike are posted on the National site, in a recent email sent to all members nationwide, and right here!! Get 'r done!!! [Ed: In March updated information was posted at [this link](#) (pdf).]

STAR2017 Online Registration: planetreg.com/star2017

2017 Honda Africa Twin Raffle Tickets: planetreg.com/mstaraffle2017

There are several good reasons why the MSTAs have held rallies in Colorado repeatedly over the decades... #1- Amazing riding!! If you've never ridden west of the Mississippi River, you are in for a stunning experience!! Join us for the fun!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT VanMSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

Central Florida April Lunch Ride:

Saturday, April 8th, 11:45 AM – 1:30 PM,

Back to an old favorite near some of the curvy roads in Lake County...

[JB Boondocks](#)

704 S. Lakeshore Blvd,

Howey-In-The-Hills, FL 34737

March Ride Report:

14 riders attended the Bike Week Lunch at [Brian's BBQ](#) in Deland on March 16th.

After good food & camaraderie with old friends, the group split up going back to events at the track or on the Ocala National Forest ride, and some enjoyed the St. Johns waterway on a sunny, but brisk boat ride.



Teresa Vipond, DeLand
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Member Report

Just For Fun Event – Ocala 2017

By Steve Phillips

The second weekend in March provided a great opportunity for riding with friends. Jim and Dianne Park organized a just-for-fun event in Ocala, Florida that included some of the best roads this state has to offer. In addition to the great roads and scenery, the weekend included several very cool destinations.

On Friday morning the group had breakfast at the Old Spanish Sugar Mill Grill and Griddle House located in the De Leon Springs State Park. The griddle house is known for letting you cook your own pancakes on a griddle located in the middle of your table. It seemed to work pretty well based on the amount of pancakes that were cooked and eaten. The park is a scenic, family-friendly place with an interesting history including a water-skiing elephant that performed during the park’s time as an old Florida tourist attraction.



Pat Mogavero and Jim Park sit patiently beside the pool for our group to be called up.
(Photos: Don Moe)



Pat Mogavero, Dianne & Jim Park, Steve Phillips, Larry Watts eagerly await the pancake mix!

(Photo: Don Moe)

After breakfast we visited the world's greatest lawn ornament vendor, the [Barberville Roadside Yard Art & Produce](#). If you want a 16ft T-Rex for your front yard you can get it there, notwithstanding what your HOA thinks. The rest of the day was spent riding the great roads around Ocala before returning to the hotel for happy hour and dinner.

While Friday was a great day, on Saturday the weather was spectacular. One of those cloudless Florida winter days with the temperature in the mid-sixties. Our stops on Saturday included the small town of Micanopy south of Gainesville and the [Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings](#) homestead. She was a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist famous for writing the *Yearling*. In addition to the movie of the same name based on the novel, there was also a movie made about her in 1983 called *Cross Creek* which stars Mary Steenburgen.

All in all this was indeed a fun event. Not only was the riding great but the evening happy hours and dinners with new and old friends was also a lot of fun. Thanks to Jim and Dianne for organizing such a fun event.

Steve Phillips



Barberville's T-Rex (Photo: Steve Phillips)



Some of the scenic riding along Florida's back roads. (Photo: Don Moe)

Florida MSTA Apparel

We have just released the link for our Florida State Storefront!! Go to 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!!



Florida Rides This Month

Important Note

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 Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **April 8th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: [JB Boondocks](#) – 704 S. Lakeshore Blvd, Howey-In-The-Hills, FL 34737 ☎352-324-3600 ([map](#))
Description: Back to an old favorite near some of the curvy roads in Lake County...
Contact: Teresa Vipond termayn@gmail.com or ☎713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **April 15th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: [Woody's River Roo Pub & Grill](#), 5717 18th St. East, Ellenton, FL 34222 ☎941-722-2391 ([map](#))
Description: Join us for a new adventure!! We head to another waterfront delight on the recommendation of a trusted scout!! How can we miss?!? Sun, water, good food...
Contact: Van busavan@flmsta.org or ☎561-386-2594

Special Events

Barret-Jackson in (West) Palm Beach

When: Thurs.-Sat., **April 6 - 8**
Where: South Florida Fairgrounds 9067 Southern Blvd West Palm Beach, FL 33411 ([map](#))
Description: Plan to visit the 15th annual auction, held at the S. Fl. Fairgrounds!! Multiple tents will be filled with artful, whimsy and truly collectable cars and more!!
And the “ride along” experiences are worth getting there early each day!!
Go to www.barrett-jackson.com for ALL the info about the show and ticket sales...

Riding Into History Bike Show

When: Sat., **May 20th**
Where: World Golf Village, St Augustine, FL 32092 ([map](#))
Description: Once again, the big show comes to St. Augustine!! Hit their website for all the details!!
www.ridingintohistory.org

This year, they are honoring the Japanese Motorcycle!! And they have the father/son team of Yvon and Miguel Duhamel as Grand Marshals!! Both are AMA Hall of Fame members, as well as many, many other awards!!

Hot damn!

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 possible updates.

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 6th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: TBA
Description: Place holder for the May lunch ride. Last Central LUNCH ride until September!!
Contact: Teresa Vipond, termayn@gmail.com, or ☎713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **May 13th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: [Lone Cabbage Fish Camp](#), 8199 W. King St, Cocoa, FL 32926 ☎321-632-4199 ([map](#))
Description: We had blast here last year!! And it gives us a chance for the Central and South groups to meet up over some tasty grub!! This is just about as far north as the Southies get to ride! This will be the last LUNCH ride for us until September!!
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or ☎561-386-2594

Regional Events

North Georgia Classic

When: Fri.-Sun., **April 21-23, 2017**
Where: [Quality Inn](#) – 15 Yonah St, Helen, GA 30545 ☎706-878-2268 ([map](#))
Description: Event motel will be the Quality Inn in Helen Georgia with all rooms recently renovated. A block of rooms is being held at a \$89 rate for this event until April 7, 2017. Call 706-878-2268 and mention MSTA for your reservation.
Location: Helen, GA – Excellent street riding in the north Georgia mountains.
Website: msta-se.com/helen/
Forum: ridemsta.com/mstaforums/north-georgia-classic/2017-north-georgia-classic/
Contact: Andray Hubble, jandrayhubble@mindspring.com, or ☎256-572-2719

Tri-STAR

When: Fri.-Mon., **May 26-29, 2017**
Where: [Alleghany Inn](#), 341 N. Main St, Sparta, NC 28675 ☎888-372-2501 ([map](#))
Description: A regional favorite!! Special room rate. We'll have a cookout Friday night, a catered dinner Saturday night, and make a trek down to the Mexican restaurant at the other end of town for dinner Sunday night.
Location: Sparta, NC – Excellent street riding in Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina.
Websites: msta-se.com/tristar/ and ridemsta.com/srblog/tri-star/
Forum: ridemsta.com/mstaforums/tristar/2017-tristar-event/
Contact: Geoffrey Greene, hawkgtrider@aol.com, ☎cell (865) 659-4755, home (865) 922-9887

STAR 2017

STAR 2017 – the annual rally of The Motorcycle Sport Touring Association (MSTA) will take place in Colorado Springs June 11-15, 2017



STAR 2017 (our 35th anniversary STAR!) will be headquartered in the beautiful Hotel Elegante, [just off of Interstate 25](#), in southern Colorado Springs:



Due to the usual heavy demand when we have a STAR in Colorado, the hotel is extending our special rate to cover dates before and after STAR.

Online STAR 2017 REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

www.planetReg.com/STAR2017

Update: [STAR 2017 News - March 25, 2017](#) (PDF)

A few STAR 2017 Highlights

- 🏍 Spectacular 14,000 ft Pikes Peak only a short ride from the hotel.
- 🏍 Beautiful Garden of the Gods city park – another short ride.
- 🏍 Fabulous scenic mountain routes including rides to Independence Pass and Aspen, Cottonwood Pass, Mount Evans, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Leadville, Rocky Mountain National Park – and more! Colorado Springs is in the nexus of Pike, San Isabel, Arapahoe, White River and Roosevelt National Forests.
- 🏍 Proximity to scenic wonders like the Great Sand Dunes National Park.
- 🏍 Superb dual sporting – close to the hotel – Rampart Range (the dual sport playground of the Front Range) and the Gold Belt Scenic Byway through Victor and Cripple Creek, plus more exciting dual sport venues.
- 🏍 Full support by one of Colorado’s premier motorcycle dealers, Apex Sports – just a short trip from the hotel.
- 🏍 A beautiful and vibrant downtown area a short distance away, with a diversity of night life.
- 🏍 Many nearby restaurants and micro-breweries, including the hotels own award-winning restaurant and bar.
- 🏍 Many museums and historical sites within and surrounding Colorado Springs.
- 🏍 Great shopping in Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs.
- 🏍 A climate that is very comfortable all summer.
- 🏍 Many, many non-riding sight-seeing venues like, Seven Falls, Royal Gorge, Pike Peak Cog Railway, US Air Force Academy, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Manitou Cliff Dwellings and more! If there ever was a STAR to bring the family to, this is it.
- 🏍 A very motorcycle friendly community.

If you are on the MSTA email list you will get an email with a link to the registration site. For those who prefer to register by mail, print out the registration form at this link and mail it in with your payment (check or CC): ridemsta.com/srblog/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Star-17-Application.pdf

Can anyone attend? **YES** – You do need to be an MSTA member to attend, but your registration is discounted equal to a one year membership! Contact us to get your discount code or if you have questions:

☎ 970-667-0460

✉ hhemstreet@planetreg.com

Want to know more about visiting the Colorado Springs area?

🏍 View photos: www.visitcos.com

🏍 Download the visitors’ brochure: www.visitcos.com/order-official-visitor-guide

Want to talk about or plan with other members – join us on our MSTA STAR 2017 Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/groups/cospringsstar

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](#). We welcome articles and comments from our members for publication. Contact the editor at: editor@flmsta.org. The MSTA National [website](#) has extensive event information:

- 🏍️ To join the MSTA or renew your membership: [click here](#).
- 🏍️ For the sanctioned events: [click here](#).
- 🏍️ For Just-For-Fun events in 2017: [click here](#).

National MSTA ridemsta.com

Florida MSTA www.flmsta.org

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ALL GRAPHICS WERE PROVIDED BY THE CREDITED AUTHOR, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

This month's [Mystery Hyperlink](#) is related to the safety article.

CLASSIFIED ADS

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to editor@flmsta.org