



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 8 Issue 2

Events in February

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Feature Article

Riding The Talimena National Scenic Byway

By “NoGutsNoGlory” from near Dallas, TX

[Ed: An anonymous rider posted this article on the [AdvRider.com Forum](#) for a trip in November 2012. It has been slightly edited for publication. Many of our readers may find this ride report of interest in planning their visit to STAR2015 in Springdale, Arkansas in June. Photos are from the author's collection on [SmugMug](#). The map was created from author's route description. Click on map or photos for larger versions.]

If you want to enjoy fall colors and you live just north of Dallas, TX, you can either go to the hill country and see the Lost Maples area or you can get out of Texas altogether. The Lost Maples area in the Texas hill country is an amazing area – between the Texas Red Oaks and the Bigtooth Maples the fall colors are spectacular. The state park's [website](#) has more information. It is called Lost Maples as it is far removed from any other maple forest and no one is really sure how all those Bigtooth Maples ended up there. If you need a fall color fix in mid to late November this place is hard to beat.

But that's not what this ride report is about. Instead of heading south

to hill country, three of us headed north to ride the [Talimena National Scenic Byway](#). The Talimena National Scenic Byway is very unique as it runs atop the ridge of the Ouachita Mountains, which is one of the few mountain ranges in the USA that runs east-west, instead of north-south. It is approximately 54 miles long and runs between Talihina, OK and Mena, AR, hence the name Talimena. Both towns are nice but I prefer Mena so we rode north to Talihina to start the trail there and then spend the night in Mena, AR.

This road was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2005 and since it runs on the top of the mountain ridge, it provides spectacular scenery along with plenty of twisties and elevation changes. This short 54-mile stretch includes 22 scenic vista pull-outs and 13% grades – it's an amazing ride!



Getting the Wing ready to go and watching the sunrise.



Here my friends were just arriving, a husband and wife who both ride. As is usually the case, my friend's wife is always ready before we are and this time was no different.



We ride out of Plano and head northeast to Paris, TX. From there we took Hwy 195 towards the Red River and the Oklahoma state line. This little stretch of road is populated with some stunning farms and ranches and old growth trees covering the road as you leave Paris. It is a great ride that I wasn't expecting as we were still in the flats and couldn't even see the mountains yet.

After you cross the Red River – sorry, no picture, living only an hour away we cross it so many times that it is anticlimactic and I didn't take a picture of it this time – you go through Idabel and end up in Broken Bow, OK. At this point it was time to stop for an early lunch and to fuel up as there aren't too many fine dining establishments in Talihina. Turns out there aren't too many fine dining establishments in Broken Bow for that matter. Either that or our GPS and cell phone apps both found all the out-of-business restaurants in the entire town. The one restaurant we found that was still in business turns out to have great Mexican food – thank goodness we all liked Mexican. *[It's on US-259, just three blocks north of US-70.]*



After a leisurely lunch, we headed north past the [Beaver Bend State Park](#). We are finally getting into the hills with lots of pine trees, but not much color yet.

As we continued north, finally we hit some color as we headed towards Talihina.



Just outside Talihina is where you pick up the west end of the Talimena National Scenic Byway.



This is what we came here for!!! It is an amazing road and we hit the colors at almost full peak on a gorgeous day to be alive and riding motorcycles. As we headed east and started climbing up the ridge, the colors and scenery changed and got even better. The colors were more frequent, vibrant and the vistas were beautiful.



More moving pictures from the bike...



Two of my favorite pictures from the trip...



The pictures say more than I ever could...







Arrived in Mena, AR for the night...



A few pics on the way home the next day...





Coming back from Talihina heading towards Broken Bow, we stopped for gas and asked the Park Ranger, who was also there getting gas, where is a good place for lunch. He says right here, at the gas station, and I say really? He says, “Yes, they have the best BBQ around.” OK, so they are the only BBQ around 😊, and yes, it was very good. The shed to the right of the bikes is the smoke shack. Smelled wonderful and tasted even better! [Note: Duncan’s is located with the E-Z Mart on US-259 at Stevens Gap Road just north of SR-259A.]



We had a great time doing this trip and planned to do it again this year. However, my friend’s wife recently underwent major surgery on one foot. Once that heals she gets the distinct pleasure of having the same operation on her other foot. Since she won’t be riding for the rest of the year, maybe I’ll grab the Triumph and make a day trip out of it. It’s about 500 miles RT but if you leave early it makes for an incredible trip!

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.*

Head and Eyes

This month's article is all about technique. Something as simple, or maybe not so, as how you use your head and eyes.

Everyone has heard the phrase "You go where you look". Why does it happen? There is a bio-mechanical term called "body indexing". Simply explained, your head is attached to the rest of you, so when you turn your head, the body naturally orients in that direction. Since you are attached to the bike at the handlebars, butt and feet, so goes the motorcycle. Your eyes further refine this by giving you a visual target at which to aim your body and bike. That's why we tell riders to look through the curve; look away from the obstacle to a clear path, etc. If you look at the dead skunk in the road, you're probably going to hit it...and spend a lot of time cleaning afterwards, both the bike and yourself.

The head and eyes do a few other things for us in terms of riding. One of the main contributions is to our balance, particularly at slow speed. Have you ever seen someone wobble to a stop or when they start off? The next time you see it, look at their head and eyes. Chances are they are looking down. Your balance is controlled by your inner ear, collectively called the vestibular system in terms of balance. Without going into a lot of medical detail, suffice it to say that in order to keep our balance, we use our eyes and head to orient ourselves relative to the horizon, or perpendicular to the ground. If you wonder why you are wobbling when you stop, check your head and eyes position. Keeping them up and on the horizon, and letting your peripheral vision control your stopping point, will smooth out your stops. The same thing for your starts. Don't bother looking at the bike as you ease out the clutch. Keep your head and eyes up, and it will help your balance. It becomes even more critical in slow tight turns, like U-turns in parking lots. Yes, you need to turn your head and eyes to see around that tight turn. However, you also need to keep your head and eyes up and level while you complete the turn.

Some more thoughts about head and eyes. Experts tell us our central vision extends to only about 3 degrees off center. Everything outside of that is peripheral vision. We think it is a lot wider than that, because we routinely move our head and eyes in search of visual information. While peripheral vision is a good thing, we need to constantly keep our eyes moving, using our central vision to gather visual data to keep ourselves safe.

Don't get complacent with your head and eyes. Keep looking around. MSF suggests using a system for gathering visual information. Think "Road surface - Traffic devices - Other Traffic" and use these as categories to visually search for clues and information to keep you safe as you ride.

Your head and eyes are one of the keys to safe, smooth riding. They are also critical in keeping you safe as you enjoy our amazing sport!

Ride Safe!

Doug Westly – Safety Editor



Graphic: [Target fixation: you go where you look](#)

Florida News

South Director's Report

Artic Vortex... 36" of Snow... Another Snow Front Coming...

The weather reports this year seem to be in a foreign language!! I don't know what they're talking about!! We've been struggling with whether to turn the A/C back on...



Van VanSteelant

So, did you take advantage of the best riding weather in the country?? We had two tremendous RTEs this month. You'll catch up with the Central ride elsewhere in our Gator Tale. Hint, it was terrific!! As for the South ride, we had a bit of threatening rain to deal with. Depending on where you started your ride, you might have been soaked, or in partial sunshine!! For the Eastsiders, we started on damp roads, encountered a misting out in the Glades, and "endured" overcast skies the rest of the day! A total of 12 riders and four drivers made their way to Roland Martin's [Tiki Bar](#) in Clewiston. A good turnout for such a southerly destination!! We had some new faces as well as a farewell visit by Woody and his lovely bride. They will be returning to New Zealand for a few years after 12+ years here operating yachts for the very well-heeled!! The weather probably contributed to the laid back nature of the Tiki Bar, as the "shiny bike" crowd kept their chromed beauties in the garage!! We all had a great time, good food and service, and another successful 50/50 raffle! Alan Berry took home \$21, and we added \$21 to our total, now at \$487.00. Thanks to all who participate!!



What's Next??

We have two lunch rides and a special event coming up in February!! On February 7th, Teresa will have the Central riders heading to the [Umatilla Inn & Restaurant](#), in Umatilla!! You might want to save some room for desert at the ice cream parlor next door!! At the end of the month, the South ride is to Jay Bee's, and oldie but goodie!! You might want to check out the fish camps that dot the area east and north of this rustic place. Lots of outdoor focus in this wetland and forested area. In between, if you're in the West Palm Beach area on February 21st, join us at the [Iron and Clematis Vintage Motorcycle Festival](#). By now, you know where to go for all the details... www.flmsta.org We are scheduled out through May, so update your own planners, and be sure to join us!!

We are always looking for unique lunch spots for the next few months. As long as they can handle 10-20 riders at once, we want to hear from you!! AND know this, we are looking for members to share anything that interests them with the rest of the gang!! Favorite roads traveled recently; travel photos; why your ride is the best; what your first ride was; recent training you've completed and your "a-ha" moment; best advice you've ever heard about motorcycling; new gear purchases; new parts, farkles, accessories that everybody else should know about; promote your motorcycle biz or product that we all should know about... You get the idea, so, send your idea to me and we'll see what/where/when we can enjoy your presentation!! The more the merrier!! Don't worry about how long you need to entertain us! Two minutes or twenty, it won't matter! If we could do this at every ride...

We are in the final stages of scheduling all of the 2015 lunch/brunch rides. The dates and places are posted through March. The rest of the dates-only are posted through May, so you'll be able to mark your calendars and be sure to line up those pesky "honey dos" around the reality of what's really important....

Membership News

As we often receive updates about our current state membership after we "go to press", we don't always welcome our new Florida members as soon as they sign up!

This month we can welcome the following new members:

- Kostas Sfakiotakis, Atlantic Beach
- Bill and Nicole Rorke, Vero Beach

If you know any of the following riders, please let them know that their MSTA memberships have recently expired, or will expire very soon:

- Buck DeShazo
- Ken Ford
- Charles Headrick
- Frances Headrick
- Sam Kalush
- Selwyn Woody Kitney
- Sean Ledingham
- John Kyle
- Alex Mattice
- Rick Nader
- James Pettit
- Tom Roe
- Rick Sapir
- Jon Selby

As a heads up to all, be sure to forward any new email addresses or changes to Choon Gan at membership@ridemsta.com. He then forwards the info to the various State Directors, VPs, and EC, as well as our newsletter editor.

Random Ramblings!

You know that you earn \$5 STARBUCCs for each new member you recruit to the MSTA, right?!? You can use them for MSTA products, event registrations, membership renewals, etc. Be sure to get your supply of our NEW ITRs (Invitations to Ride) quad-folds at our next RTE, or email me and I'll send some along to you!!!

You have registered for STAR and the raffle bike, right?!? This will be a terrific STAR and is being held in an area that everybody needs to check out. The regional rally that runs in and around this area routinely hosts 60-80 riders, for just a weekend's event!! Check out the National site for more info!!

I had a great time with Jim, Dianne and Steve at the first International Motorcycle Show at the Miami Beach Convention Center!! We had breakfast before the doors opened just down the street, and spent hours doing the touchy-feely thing with all the bikes and goods from all of the manufactures and vendors!! Having built another appetite, we ventured just south of the Center to dine alfresco at a wonderful Italian place on the Lincoln Road Mall. Great show, great weather, great friends!!!

Be sure to check our National site for the latest schedule of sanctioned events for 2015. I count ten, including STAR. That doesn't include the "Just For Fun" events that will pop up during the year!! We have sooo many opportunities to ride with our club!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

January 10th was a cool, sunny day for 21 riders & 3 passengers who met at the Castaways restaurant in Astor. Attendees were from Leesburg, Lakeland, Plant City, Winter Park, Wildwood, Melbourne, Vero Beach, Valkaria, Flagler, & Deland. We enjoyed lunch outdoors overlooking the St. Johns River. Merchant member, Tim Vipond donated some Amsoil door prizes.



The February ride is scheduled for the 7th to Umatilla at the Umatilla Inn, 605 North Central Avenue, Umatilla, FL 32784. [Note: This RTE event had been previously scheduled for February 21st.]

The March ride is scheduled for the 7th to Deland at [Brian's BBQ](#), 795 N. Spring Garden (Hwy. 15A), Deland 32720. We have three tables reserved in the meeting room. This will coincide with the Downtown Deland Bike Rally, which is going on all day. More info at [delandrally.com](#).

Teresa Vipond
DeLand, FL
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Northeast Director's Report

If you would consider taking the position of Northeast Director, please contact Van.

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, **February 7th**, 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm [Rescheduled from Feb. 21st.]
Where: [The Umatilla Inn & Restaurant](#), 605 Central Ave. (Hwy. 19), Umatilla, FL 32784 ☎352-669-1325
([map](#))
Description: We've been there. They have good service, good food & plenty of seating. There's also an ice cream shop next door.
Contact: Teresa Vipond - termayn@gmail.com or ☎713-504-5763

Vintage Motorcycle Festival

When: Sat, **February 21st**, 12:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Where: Iron and Clematis Vintage Motorcycle Festival, West Palm Beach, FL ([map](#))
Description: This is fun show right downtown West Palm Beach. Vintage bikes and lifestyle are display, with music, charity drawings and specialty vendors.
“The Downtown Development Authority, City of West Palm Beach, and Vintage Iron Club have joined forces again to bring one of the largest growing cultural movements back to Palm Beach County. The vintage motorcycle revival has taken the nation by storm over the last few years and Clematis St. will be hosting what has become one of the largest vintage motorcycle festivals in Florida.”

Check out these sites for more information: [lightningcustoms.com](#) & [vintageironclub.org](#)

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **February 28th**, 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
Where: [Jay Bees](#), 8625 Florida 60, Lake Wales, FL 33898 ☎863-696-1901 ([map](#))
Description: An oldie but goodie!! They always treat us right, and there are some fun roads nearby... You might have to look a little, but they are there! Plan to make the most of the day and take the l-o-n-g way to and fro...
Contact: Van - busavan@flahsta.org or ☎561-386-2594

Future Florida Events

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.

Daytona Bike Week

When: **Friday, March 6th through Saturday, March 15th**

Where: Downtown Daytona Beach, FL ([maps](#))

Description: More info at [DaytonaBikeWeek](#).

Deland Bike Rally

When: Sat, **March 7th**, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Where: Wells Fargo Parking Lot, 131 E. New York Ave., Deland 32720 ([map](#))

Description: More info at [delandrally.com](#).

Contact: Troy Rentz ☎386-801-1810

Daytona Bike Week Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **March 12th**, 10:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Where: [The South Beach Grill](#), 45 Cubbedge Rd, St Augustine, FL 32080 ☎904-471-8700 ([map](#))

Description: Cross Streets: Near the intersection of Cubbedge Rd and A Ave; One block south of SR-206.

Phil Ridgdill will once again host a lunch ride in the Daytona area for both local and out-of-state members and friends!! This is the same great location as last year!!

NOTE: this happens on THURSDAY during bike week!

SPECIAL NOTE!!: They have a very busy business, and an early arrival will help secure the upstairs dining room. Look to park your bike by 10:30AM, meet with Phil and fellow members and friends, and be ready to “storm” the second floor as they open the doors at 11AM!! Phil will be there to wrangle the crowd, and can be reached at 904-699-2447 with pertinent questions!

Thanks, Phil!!

Contact: Phil Ridgdil ☎904-699-2447

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **March 28th**, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Where: **T.B.A**

Description:

Contact: Van - busavan@flahsta.org or ☎561-386-2594

Member Profile

We would like to publish profiles of our members, on a strictly voluntary basis of course. If you would like to participate, please send an email (or a letter) to the [editor](#) of our Florida newsletter and answer as many of the following questions as you feel appropriate. Please send an attachment with a suitable photo of you with your primary or favorite motorcycle. If you prefer to send by regular mail, please find the mailing address [below](#).

Member Profile Questions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Hometown/State? | Who or what was your biggest influence in motorcycling? |
| What was your first motorcycle? | What are your favorite places to ride? |
| Current motorcycles? | Describe a memorable motorcycle adventure? |
| What is your all-time favorite motorcycle? | What is the best motorcycle advice or tip learned over the years? |
| How long have you been riding? | What turns you on about motorcycles or riding? |
| When did you join the MSTA? | What do you get out of your MSTA membership? |
| How did you hear about the MSTA? | What are your hobbies and interests outside of motorcycling? |

Thank you for your participation.

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page.

MSTA website information on upcoming sanctioned events: [click here](#). For Just-For-Fun events: [click here](#).

National MSTA www.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](#) amplifies on this month's safety article.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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