



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 8 Issue 10

Events in October

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Feature Article

The Isle of Man — TT Week

By “civ”

[Ed: Under the handle “civ”, the author posted [this ride report](#) to the “Day Trippin’” section of the AdvRider.com Forum on 5/15/2015. It has been abbreviated and edited for publication. All photos by the author unless stated otherwise. Refer to original article for more photos. Click on hyperlinks for more info. Click on photo for its original.]

The [Isle of Man](#) is located in the Irish Sea. It is a self-governing British Crown dependency. There are several races held on public roads during the year



on various courses, the most famous being the TT, held at the start of

June. If you’ve not heard of the [Isle of Man TT](#) motorcycle races yet, go and watch this video —

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRWp9rhfS_0 — and then come back!

This is the TT course marked out on a map of the island, which should make some of the locations mentioned below to make sense.



The TT is held entirely on what are normally public roads – through towns and villages and over a mountain, with little to no “run off” areas to speak of. The top riders can complete a lap at **average** speeds of more than 130mph (209km/h).

If you’re after photos of the racing itself, there are others who have done it much better than I would (my pictures are all taken on my phone and racing bikes are fast! In fact, looking back over these photos, the only ones I seemed to capture were

sidecars! This should hopefully give more an idea of the experience of enjoying being on the island for two weeks, which was a great trip in its own right, even aside from the racing.



There were a few other bikes waiting for the ferry, the [Manannan](#), which is one of two ferries running to the Isle of Man by the [Steam Packet Company](#), the oldest continuously operating passenger shipping company in the world.



Ferry tickets sell out every year a long time in advance. We had to book nearly a year ahead of our sailing and still did not get the sailing times that we wanted.

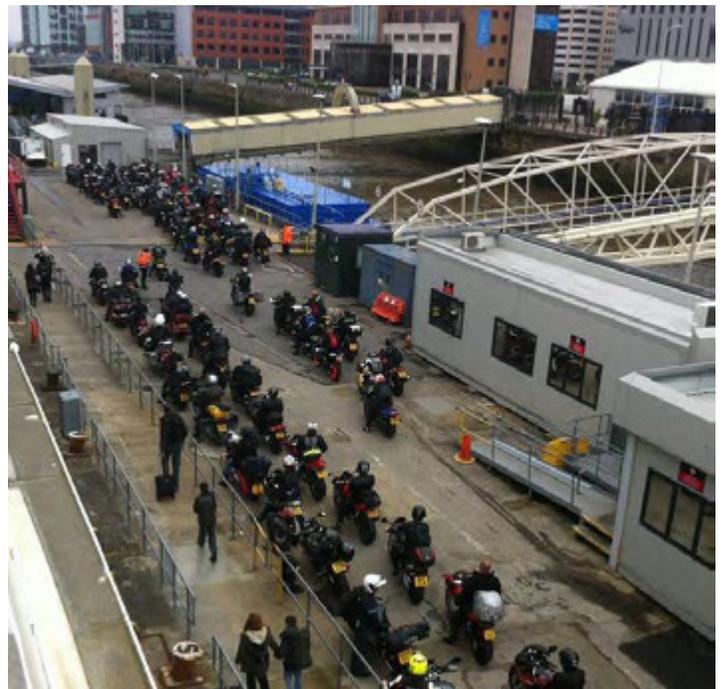
Our bikes are loaded up and ready for an early start to catch the ferry in [Liverpool](#). Stopping for breakfast at a motorway services.

I brought along a waterproof over-suit belonging to a friend. We all wore them because the weather forecast was “heavy rain”. We didn’t see a drop.

Checking in for the ferry in Liverpool.



After my VFR was tied down on the ferry, we went upstairs to watch all the later arrivals boarding.



Goodbye, Liverpool!

Arriving at the other end, there wasn't much breathing room between vehicles!



Going to explore on foot...

After arriving, we went straight to our "homestay" accommodation in [Douglas](#), close to [Governors Bridge](#) and right on the TT course.

Homestay is a scheme operated by the Isle of Man government allowing local residents to open up their homes for B&B accommodation during TT week. We were made to feel incredibly welcome!

Every important landmark/corner on the course is marked with these signs.



The famous grandstand.



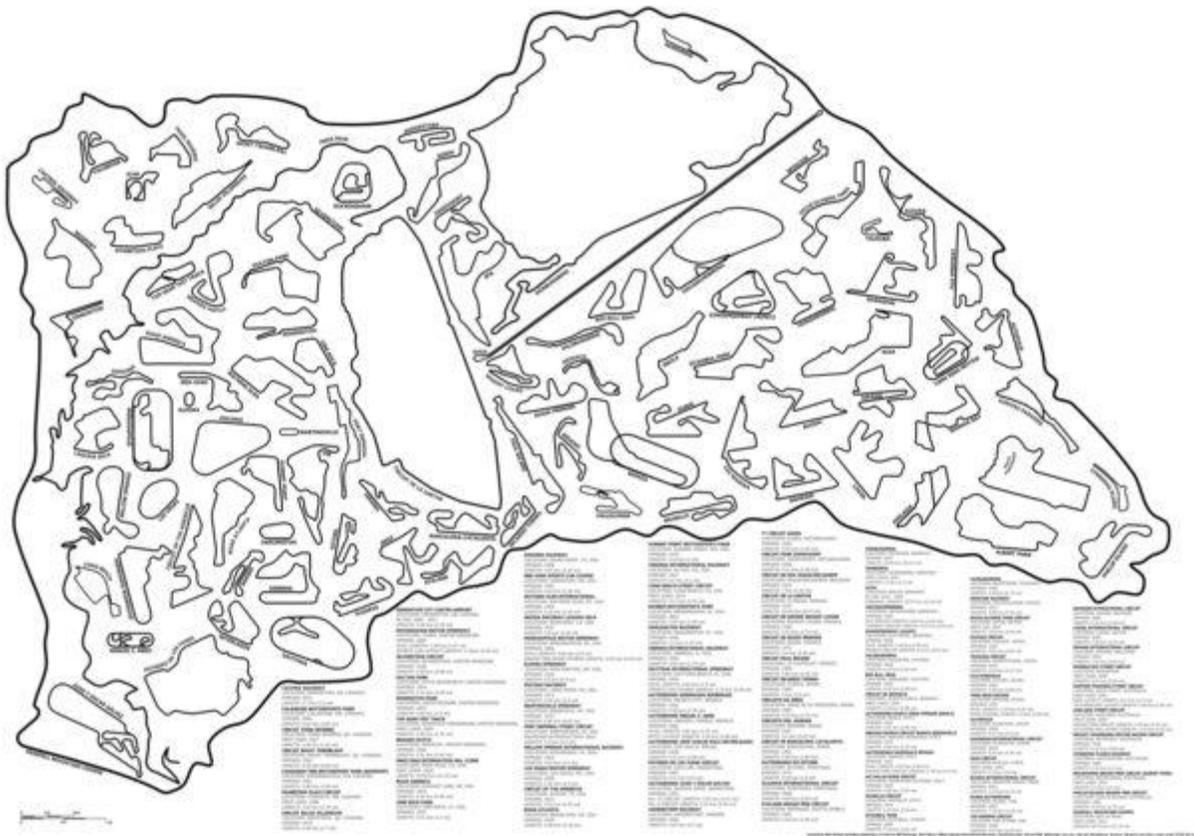
The scoreboard is still manually operated by local scout groups during racing.

With roads closed for the evening, a sidecar practice session was due to begin. Grandstand seating is free during the first few days of practice week.



Unfortunately the session was ended before it could begin due to rain around the island. One lap of the course is 37.73 miles (60.72 km), and weather conditions can change drastically for the worse from one part of the course to the next.

To give an idea of scale... Here is an image (not mine) showing the scale of the course compared to other racetracks. [Click on the map or [this link](#) to view a larger, legible version in your web browser.]



The next day, with roads open as normal, we attempted to do a lap of the course on our own bikes. Several sections have unrestricted speed limits and the mountain section is made one-way AND unrestricted speed for the entire two weeks of the event. The police have a heavy presence looking out for dangerous riding, though.

This is great fun, but means you do have to share the road with people who think they are competing in the races, and forget that they are still riding on a public road! There were many accidents, and due to the potential speeds involved, the police often opt to close the entire road for safety until the accident has been investigated and cleared away.

In this case, we had to stop our lap in [Ramsey](#) as the mountain section was closed due to an accident. As the event went on and the roads got busier and busier, it ended up seeming like it was closed more than it was open.



After a cup of tea and wander around Ramsey, the mountain section of the course was re-opened (until the next accident) and we could complete our lap.

Back at the grandstand, the pit lane is opened up for public bike parking when racing is not in progress.

The paddock is completely open to the public to wander around at all times, to see the bikes and the top racers working on them.



Out for another ride, stopped to admire the view over [Douglas Bay](#)



Then a visit to [Groudle Glen Railway](#) and a pleasant steam train ride along the coast to “Sea Lion Rocks.” First opened in 1896 to serve the now long-gone zoo and closed at the outbreak of WW2, the railway was re-opened in 1992. The former zoo previously housed sea lions and polar bears and is now a tea room!



Out for another lap of the course, we stopped at [Hillberry Corner](#). We returned later that week to watch the racing from here. During racing, you get an incredible view of the bikes coming down the hill and into the corner. This is the view looking back up the road from Hillberry...



A ride down to [Castletown](#), in the south of the island. Before the TT properly starts, the “Pre TT Classic” race takes place on another road-based circuit in the south of the island. We watched from Castletown Corner. I did my best to show just how close the riders get, but they were too quick for my phone’s camera. Also pictured: A cup of tea.



Part of the course is a bridge that goes over this. How many racetracks have the odd puff of smoke from a steam train drift across them?



Back on the TT course. Waiting at the [Gooseneck](#) for racing to start, another great place to watch from. It goes eerily quiet when the roads close and you’re waiting for racing to start.

Other than the paid grandstands, which you’re under no obligation to use, it’s completely free to sit or stand anywhere at the side of the road around the course. (except for a few areas which are restricted for safety reasons)



Racing aside, there is so much to do on the island. While out riding, we ended up in [Peel](#) Harbour and spotted [Peel Castle](#).

Views from Peel Castle



A little hold up on the way home...

Back at Hillberry Corner. Although you can watch from most places around the course for free and don't have to sit in any official grandstands, we chose to try it out and the view was excellent. £5 to watch from here for the evening.



The electric tram can take you up to the mountain section of the TT course.



When we arrived, there was no racing taking place, but the road had been closed due to another wannabe racer having a crash and an ambulance having to attend.

The tram then continues to the summit of the mountain... where we couldn't see much due to the low cloud.



While waiting for roads to re-open at Hillberry, we went out for a different kind of ride, this time on the [Manx Electric Railway](#).



The tram tracks actually cross the road here. During racing, the tram stops just short of the track and there is a footbridge to get to the other side.



The mountain section has an unrestricted speed limit, but cones are placed in certain sections to slow riders and drivers down where necessary - such as at the tram crossing! Each one of these cones needs to be collected before racing starts and put out again afterwards before the road can re-open to the public.

Memorial to [Joey Dunlop](#), won a record 26 times at the TT. His brother also had 14 podiums, and his nephews [William](#) and [Michael](#) race now. During the week we were there, Michael won 4 of the races. Quite an extraordinary family!



I'd highly recommend the film "Road" if you're interested in learning more about the Dunlop family <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3546370/>

Back at the bottom of the mountain, this seemed to be what the side of every road on the island looked like!



We visited the [Manx Museum](#). Despite the unimpressed look on my brother's face here, we had a genuinely interesting few hours learning about the history of the island.



Needless to say, there were bikes.





Riding through Ramsey just as the schools were coming out. Needless to say there was much waving and revving of engines!

It's hard to show in pictures just how many bikes there were parked everywhere you looked!

Taking in the atmosphere at the [Creg Ny Baa](#) pub.



As with all the other cones etc. on the course, all of this has to be cleared away before racing and put back before it can be re-opened as a public road.

They **really** like their trains and trams on the Isle of Man.



Everything everywhere revolves around bikes during the two weeks of the TT, even to cleaning our helmet visors.

This was outside a café, and far from an unusual sight!



Mountain Road Closed

There are signs around the island to show the status of the mountain road, as it is a main route between the two biggest towns (when it's not a racetrack!). This time at least it was closed for racing and not because of somebody crashing! It also provided a convenient place to park my bike.

[Barregarrow](#). The marshals were happy for us to sit here, as long as we didn't lean out too far!



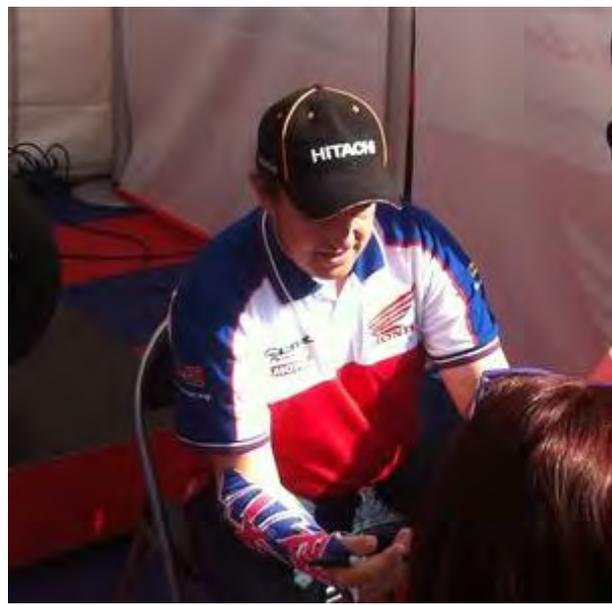
Not my video, but this shows the speeds around this part of the course, and how close the bikes get to you!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozT_BGvKBAY

Walking around the paddock again. These are William Dunlop and [Guy Martin](#)'s bikes



[Conor Cummins](#)

[John McGuinness](#)



And after meeting the riders... back out on the course to see them race!

Honestly, a pleasant day out on its own. The bike racing is just the cherry on top!

And the perfect place for a nap between races



After the race, a trip down to the beach.

And what trip to the beach is complete without some local ice cream.



A visit to [Onchan](#) Raceway to watch the White Helmets, the Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team.

Check the Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team's website: <http://www.army.mod.uk/signals/24986.aspx>

They were also joined by the [Purple Helmets](#) stunt team, who have to be seen to be believed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gbHkSU0VqY
(not my video)



Back in the pit lane. The guys in front of us are filming that evening's TV coverage!

[Braddan Bridge](#). Waiting for roads to close and racing to start. Fantastic vantage point.



Marshals around the course need to make sure the track is clear before racing can start. There are over 500 of them around the course, all volunteers.

The [Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team](#), the Red Arrows, put on a display over Ramsey.



[C90](#) power at the Ramsey Sprint.

The [Ramsey Sprint](#) is a drag sprint event over a $\frac{1}{8}$ th mile strip. Anyone can compete, as long as they are willing to pay the entry fee. Motorcycles from all over the world enter, most already over as part of the TT Festival. Some bikes have special modifications, which keeps things interesting.



[TT Teas](#). Many church/village halls open up serving cakes/snacks and tea during the TT. You haven't TT-d until you've TT Tea-d.

Looks like a traffic jam... but actually parked cars and bikes along the access road to [Brandywell](#) Corner before the race starts!



An essential tool for a trip to the TT. [Manx Radio](#) provides live commentary over AM radio, so it's an important thing to have to hear updates on the race, information about road closures etc.

Fog closing in. Racing was eventually called off for the day as the visibility in this part of the course had reduced so much.



A man, trying to get a better view of the racing, trusts his side-stand more than I would.



Queuing up for the ferry home.

There are two ferries operating and by the time ours left, the other was already loading up with others departing.



There were a lot of other bikes going home.

Until next time!



I really can't say enough about how friendly and welcoming everyone we met was. Our hosts were even kind enough to make up packed lunches for us for our ride back home!

This trip was last year (2014), and with the event coming up again at the end of this month, I'll be very jealous of anybody who is going this year. I'm looking forward to a return trip already.

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.

Tips for Group Ride Leaders

As we move into riding season here in Florida, here are a few tips for those of you that will be leading group rides...

First and foremost, always remember that you are no longer riding for yourself. You are now responsible for the group. That means adjusting your riding style so that it fits the group's requirements, wants and collective ride expertise.

Speaking of ride expertise, also remember that your group ride dynamics need to fit the least experienced and/or capable rider in the group. This is caveated by saying each rider has to be able to meet the group expectation of riding expertise. If a rider simply can't keep up or is not comfortable with the ride expectations, then it is up to you as the Ride Leader to address this situation.

One of the ride strategies common to many groups or clubs is to place the most experienced and/or capable rider up front as the Ride Leader. There is nothing wrong with this, AS LONG AS the Ride Leader realizes this is not so he/she can demonstrate to everyone behind how fast/extreme they can ride. Doing this only forces group members to try and keep up, often pushing them beyond their capabilities and/or comfort levels. At best this results in a miserable ride for the group. At worst, someone exceeds their limits and a crash ensues. Being Ride Leader does not mean showing off. It means being responsible.

So how do Ride Leaders ensure a fun, safe ride for their group? Here are a few basic rules of thumb:

- 🦋 A good strategy is to take the weakest or least confident rider in the group and place them right behind the Ride Leader, or at least in mid-group. Placing them at the rear only guarantees they will be trying to keep up, possibly by exceeding their ride confidence or capabilities.
- 🦋 Place a trusted rider at the rear of the group to ride "Tail". It takes a patient rider to ride Tail, as they also need to understand the ride is about the group, not themselves.
- 🦋 Learn to ride with one eye almost constantly on your rearview mirrors.
- 🦋 Slow starts and slow stops are the rule of the day. Don't make the group try to play catch-up or look like a compressing slinky when you're stopping.
- 🦋 Safety, safety, safety. Remember you need large gaps in traffic. Red lights are your friend in group rides. Anticipate them and use them; don't try to beat them.
- 🦋 Finally, make sure to do a good pre-ride briefing. All group riders need to be on the same page, know the ride objectives, route, Ride Leader expectations, etc.

It is YOUR job as Ride Leader to keep the group safe. Do some good planning, pre-run the route if possible and make sure you remember the ride is not about you...it's about everyone behind you!

RIDE SAFE!

Doug Westly – Safety Editor



Photo by Don Moe

Florida News

South Director's Report

WELCOME TO THE FIRST WEEK OF AUTUMN... SOME WHERE ELSE???

I did check my weather apps and found that NC, ID, AR and others are indeed enjoying the relief that comes with the beginning of October!! We are still pushing 90 degree afternoons in sunny south FLA!! Which is why we enjoyed our last brunch ride of the season with a visit to a new-to-us location. September 19th found eight of us gabbing and grubbing at the [Big V Restaurant](#) in LaBelle!! With the advanced notice, they opened up the "back room" for us (easily large enough for 25-30) and gave us great service and good food!! As advertised, this place is just plain and simple, with just enough funkiness and terrific prices to let us consider returning for a lunch date next year!! It's always a relief when a new place works out, and even better when the consensus supports a return visit!



Van VanSteelant



Photo by Jim Park

We did not add to the raffle tally this month. And I haven't heard from you about what we might do with the growing funds. Here's what I wrote last month...

"More than one of you asked what we were going to do with Club's take from the 50/50 raffle. Some to the suggestions were to donate the funds to an MSTTA friendly charity, like the [Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation](#), or the [Dan Clark Safety Fund](#). Another idea was a little more hedonistic! Pick a central-state site and have a Holiday Party for the membership! We need more suggestions – legal, ethical, doable!! – from you all! We need to keep about \$50 in the kitty to cover annual website costs, so that would leave ~\$500 available right now, or maybe \$650+ by the holidays..."

What's Next??

We are back to LUNCH RIDES until next June!! More riding time, better temps, and hopefully larger crowds!! On October 10th, join Teresa at the [Airport Restaurant & Gin Mill](#) at the DeLand Airport. Two weeks later, join me for a ride to [Pahokee Mo's Tiki Bar and Sunset Grill](#) (whew!!), right on the banks of Lake O!! Yes, the place is still open. Yes, we were there a few years ago and it has been through a few owners since then. BUT, this place has such potential!! So, let's support the current owner's efforts and enjoy some water front dining!! Be sure to check out our award winning website www.flmsta.org for all things moto!!

And it's not too soon to make your plans for the AIMExpo event in Orlando!! In between our lunch rides, you better find yourself at the [Orange County Convention Center](#)!! The general public is welcome on Saturday, Oct. 17th and Sunday, Oct. 18th. Be sure to check out the event site www.aimexpousa.com for lots of info! Book your hotel NOW, as this event is adding 100,000 square feet of exhibit space over last year's area, and there's something called Fright Nights at many of the Orlando attraction venues that draw huge crowds

every year!! Be sure to set aside some time to check out the demo ride area! Our very own Doug and Becky Westly will be running the Honda demo team featuring street bikes, and two and four wheel off-road rides!!

I just went online to purchase tickets. Couldn't be simpler, and they offer a couple of discounts!! I used my AMA membership and took advantage of the bikebandit.com promo as well. Suggestion...plan on TWO days to take in the whole event!! You'll be glad you did!!

Membership News

I did not receive an update this month, so I'll hope to have lots of new info next month!! As a heads up to all, be sure to forward any new email addresses or changes to Michael Tissandier, membership@ridemsta.com. He then forwards the info to the various State Directors, VP's, and EC, as well as our newsletter editor.

Random Ramblings!

Here's what I hinted about a JFF event last month... "Look forward to a long overdue FL MSTA Just-For-Fun Event, targeted for November. We will tie in to the Grand Opening of the [Ace Café in Orlando](#)!! We expect to receive a firm date by the end of September. They have been suffering through several remodeling woes throughout this summer!! This will be a big deal locally as well as internationally in the motorcycling community. I think this is the first Ace Café outside of [England](#)..." WELL, we did not receive any new info about their opening date!! Having spent 30+ years in the construction field, and knowing what I know about building departments, I'm not surprised by their inability to nail down a date! Stay tuned!!

Here's a long overdue THANK YOU to our regular contributors to this outstanding newsletter. I don't always send out an acknowledgement each month... But I'm grateful every time we get this "rag" out to the membership!! Good job one and all!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

The September ride was a rainout as well as some members having other commitments. Hopefully the weather for the October lunch ride will be more cooperative. We're meeting at [The Airport Restaurant & Gin Mill](#), 1120 Airport Terminal Dr., DeLand, 32724 ☎386-734-9755. We have a table reserved for 11:30 in the covered outdoor patio with a view of the runway & skydivers. The restaurant's claim-to-fame is the ½-lb. airport burgers. It's probably worth mentioning that this is not the restaurant at [DeLand Skydive](#) where we met last November. This is ½-mile west of there.

Van posted some details about the AIMExpo in his write-up. If you're planning on attending, stop by & see us at the Amsoil booth across from GoPro.

Central FL Lunch Ride

Sat. **October 10th**, 11:30-1:30 pm.

[The Airport Restaurant & Gin Mill](#)

1120 Airport Terminal Dr.,

DeLand, 32724

☎ 386-734-9755

Teresa Vipond, DeLand

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 MSTAs [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., **Oct. 10th**, 11:30-1:30 pm

Where: [The Airport Restaurant & Gin Mill](#), 1120 Airport Terminal Dr., DeLand, 32724

☎ 386-734-9755 ([map](#))

Description: We have a table reserved for 11:30 in the covered outdoor patio with a view of the runway & skydivers. The restaurant's claim-to-fame is the ½-lb. airport burgers. It's probably worth mentioning that this is not the restaurant at DeLand Skydive where we met last November. This is ½-mile west of there.

Contact: Teresa Vipond - termayn@gmail.com or ☎ 713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., **Oct. 24th**, 12:00-2:00 pm

Where: [Pahokee Mo's Tiki Bar and Sunset Grill](#), 190 N. Lake Aveune, Pahokee, FL 33476

☎ 561-771-7075 ([map](#))

Description: Hey, we are going back to a real stunning place that has been reborn on the shore of Lake O! We are back to LUNCH rides this month!! Let's help the new owners make a go of it, and enjoy the view!!

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.

MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride

When: Sat., Nov. 7th, 12:00-2:00 pm
Where: TBD
Description: Place holder for the November lunch ride!! Stay tuned!!
Contact: Teresa Vipond - termayn@gmail.com or ☎ 713-504-5763

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat., Nov. 14th, 12:00-2:00 pm
Where: TBD
Description: Place holder for the November lunch ride!! Stay tuned!!
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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Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

This month's [Mystery Hyperlink](#) (PDF) provides additional information related to the safety article.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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