

The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association Volume 7 Issue 10

Feature Article

Riding the Blue Ridge Parkway

by Ellen Kocher

Yes, most of us have ridden the <u>Blue Ridge Parkway</u>, at least a portion of it, in our travels. However, ten years ago it was decided that we'd ride the entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway starting at the southern terminus near Cherokee, NC, to the northern terminus near Waynesboro, VA. From there, we continued onto <u>Skyline Drive</u> in <u>Shenandoah National Park</u> to Front Royal, VA. The Blue Ridge Parkway travels 469 miles and Skyline Drive is said to cover 105 miles. None of these miles are meant to be hurried. With overlooks beckoning to your left and to your right, it's easy to spend awhile looking to capture those perfect pictures as you stop to admire the views

A little history of the Blue Ridge Parkway: It was conceived in 1933, recommended by Virginia senator Harry F. Byrd to President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a second scenic drive to connect to Skyline Drive. Shenandoah National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park would be linked by these roads. A joint study by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads offered routes to be considered and in 1936 the act that made the parkway a reality was signed into law. It would be another 50+ years for the last small section to be finished. The portion that included the viaduct at Linn Cove was opened to the public in 1987, thereby completing a continuous road from Virginia at Rockfish Gap, Milepost O, to Oconaluftee, Milepost 469, near Cherokee, NC.

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Ellen at the highest point along the Blue Ridge Parkway

Editor's Monthly Note:

Again I ask everyone to submit articles, stories, sale items and other information of interest to *The FL MSTA Gator Tale*. We rely on you to make this newsletter interesting and informative.

To be added to or removed from the newsletter mailing list, please contact Choon Gan at MSTA National.

We wish you all safe and fun rides!

Don Moe, Editor



Our pre-planning back in 2004 began with making advance reservations to spend a night at each of the lodges located on the Blue Ridge Parkway and on Skyline Drive. We stayed at <u>Pisgah Inn</u>, Bluffs Lodge, and <u>Peaks of Otter</u> on the Parkway. In Shenandoah National Park along Skyline Drive we stayed at <u>Big Meadows</u> and Skyland.

However, the enjoyable part of this motorcycle adventure actually started in Townsend, TN. We discovered Little River Road, a/k/a scenic TN route 73, a number of years ago and try to ride it whenever we are in the area. Our BMW's meandered on this winding road, following alongside the Little River for a while, until we ended up at US 441 by Sugarlands Visitor Center. From here, the ride south on Newfound Gap Road gets you accustomed to the curves ahead that will be experienced on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The weather started out initially with early morning fog, not unusual, and by the time we stopped at the <u>Waterrock Knob</u> overlook, we could see rain in the distance. The rain caught us before we stopped at the highest point on the Blue Ridge Parkway, <u>Richland Balsam</u> overlook, where we took the obligatory picture of the sign showing an altitude over 6,000 feet. For most of this trip, rain was part of each day and the rainsuits came on, then off, and this procedure was often repeated!

The southern part of the Parkway in North Carolina was our favorite because there were more curves. I'm not saying that riding the ridge on the Virginia portion was not enjoyable. It was simply different. The two dozen or so tunnels were in North Carolina, whereas there were more open meadows as we traveled further north and into Virginia. There are so many places to explore on the Parkway that it lends itself to multiple visits. This particular trip was made in May of 2004. However, summer and fall are popular times for traveling both the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive, since some areas are only open from May to November.

Pisgah Inn, Milepost 408.6, was our first lodging and fortunately not far from Townsend where we began our day's ride. Rain persisted and we welcomed an early stop at Pisgah. It was quite cool because of the high altitude and the dampness chilled us to the bone! Pisgah Inn is by far our favorite place to stay on the Parkway. From the porch of the second floor rooms, it's enjoyable to sit in the rockers and enjoy the view of Pisgah National Forest, even if it's cloudy and rainy! The restaurant at Pisgah is excellent also and it's open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. That evening I finished off my dinner with their chocolate silk pie. Yum! Save room for the desserts.

Among the attractions that fit into our schedule the following day was a ride off the Parkway into Asheville to tour the <u>Biltmore</u> <u>Estate</u>, America's largest home built from 1889 to 1895. It takes several hours to tour the house and surrounding gardens. Once we returned to the Parkway, we couldn't resist a stop at the <u>Folk Art Center</u> just east of Asheville to shop at their craft center. Okay, I'll take one of these, one of those. Wait, there's only so much room in the saddle bags!

We rode again and took the turnoff to Mount Mitchell, highest point



View from Pisgah Inn

(All photos by Ellen Kocher)



Biltmore Estate



east of the Mississippi. By now we were riding "in the clouds." We only stopped briefly at the restaurant for a light lunch and decided against continuing to the summit since visibility was practically nil. We retraced our route back to the Parkway.

The weather was threatening rain so we opted to forego a stop at Linn Cove Information Center. It is here that the missing link, a 7.5 mile section of the Parkway remained unfinished for 20 years due to easement issues and environmental concerns. The elevated roadway skirts the perimeter of the mountain at Linn Cove. The view from below the viaduct is testament to the complexity of its construction. On prior trips we've stopped here and

walked a portion of the nearby trail.

However, <u>Moses Cone Manor House</u> and Craft Center is a must stop. When the weather is clear it's a welcome stop if only to pause for a while on the porch overlooking the mountains and lakes in view. We decided that it's still picturesque even when fogged in!

After staying the night at Bluffs Lodge in Doughton Park, NC, we continued north and soon we entered into Virginia, which meant that Mabry Mill was nearby. This landmark is known as the most photographed area on the Parkway. If the mill is in operation when you visit, you might be able to observe a demonstration in the blacksmith shop. Spend a little time here and if it's lunchtime, the restaurant offers up some tasty selections. Even if you're not hungry, you owe it to yourself to try their cobbler a la mode!

As you continue north there are some good views of Roanoke from the various overlooks. I understand it's quite scenic at night with the lights visible in the Roanoke Valley. However, my preference would not to be riding the motorcycles on the Parkway too late in the evening. On this trip, as on other rides, we saw our share of deer, turkeys, and other critters. This was usually in the early



Moses Cone Manor House



Mabry Mill

morning or early evening in the meadows. I'll leave night driving on the Parkway to those folks in cages.

Back in 2004 we stopped at the <u>VA Explore Park</u> located at Milepost 115. There are recreated historic structures and a history museum there. However, when riding this section of the Parkway in July of 2011 on the way to the BMW rally in Bloomsburg, we stopped here and were surprised to find it closed. A current search on the internet indicates that it was reopening this summer (2014) with added bicycle trails and recreational activities.

Peaks of Otter Lodge was our resting place for the evening. Our room was located in the third section (farthest from the restaurant) of the lodge. I guess we needed the walking exercise for dinner! There's a one mile loop trail around the lake that's behind the lodge but we didn't manage to fit that into our activities.

The next morning we found our way to the <u>James River</u> Visitor Center. There is a footbridge constructed beneath the Parkway



Walkway at James River



where it crosses the James River. We enjoyed the views from this vantage point. We continued walking across the footbridge and followed the trail leading to a lock (built between 1845 and 1851) remaining from the James River and Kanawha Canal.

Our last stop on the Blue Ridge Parkway was at Milepost 5.8, Humpback Rocks Visitor Center where I took a few pictures of the re-created farmstead located there. It didn't take long to reach Milepost 0 at I-64 and US 250. We had completed the 469 miles of the BRP and were now ready to ride Skyline Drive!

Paid our admission to ride the 105 miles of Skyline Drive. My notes say we stopped at Loft Mountain wayside for an overpriced late lunch. I also noted that deer in that area wandered very near to us. They didn't seem

wary of people.

We stayed at Big Meadows that evening. This is near the Harry F. Byrd, Sr. Visitor Center. According to my diary, I had a good chicken dinner and we split the blackberry cobbler and blackberry ice cream for dessert. After dinner we wandered into one of the lodge rooms with a large fireplace and rocking chairs set up facing the mountain view. That gave us a chance to sit and relax a bit before heading back to our room.

Harry F. Byrd, Sr. Visitor Center

Around 10 pm that night a rainstorm blew in. It sounded like a hurricane with the wind howling and gusting outside. I guess since we were on the edge of the mountain and also very high on the mountain top that we experienced the full force of the blowing rain. The next morning we spotted some deer and also a bear from the balcony of our room. Glad we're not camping as I wouldn't be happy if a bear showed up outside my tent or if the tent blew over in the storm!

Today we concluded the part of this trip that covered both the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive. It wasn't far to Front Royal, VA, so we took our time packing up to leave that morning. Had lunch in Front Royal and then turned around and headed south to pick up Skyline Drive again. We'd accomplished our goal of riding the entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive. Our evening reservation was for Skyland, another lodging facility available in Shenandoah National Park. Skyland was maybe 10 miles from Big Meadows, but we wanted to stay there also to compare accommodations. It turned out that Skyland's various lodges were spread out all over the mountain and our room wasn't near the restaurant at all. In fact, most of the lodges were down the hill! Not wanting to start up the motorcycles again, we walked the uphill trail to the restaurant at dinnertime. Did I mention "uphill"? Oh, yes!!

469 miles on the Parkway. 105 miles (and then some) on Skyline Drive. It had been a leisurely ride. We'd stayed at every lodge on the Parkway plus Skyline Drive. The remainder of this vacation included some nice riding in Virginia and West Virginia before we headed south towards home. It was a great 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.

My Best Safety Tips

This is a question I've received more than once. What are the best safety tips for a motorcyclist? I'm sure everyone has their own. It might be interesting to even start a section in the STAReview monthly magazine for reader contribution (are you listening, Nick?).

Anyway, I thought I would throw out my own best 10 Rider Safety Tips to start. So here they are, sort of in increasing order of importance:

- 10. Make checking your bike part of your pre-ride routine: Don't just assume that because it was running fine when you last parked it, that everything is still good now.
- 9. Keep up with the maintenance schedule: Bike manufacturers have spent millions on development, to include how the bike should be cared for to ensure safety and longevity. Stick to the maintenance schedule.
- 8. If you're going to change a fundamental component of your bike, do the research first: Once you start changing your bike, you are potentially altering its handling and performance characteristics. Make sure you figure out FIRST what it's going to do to the bike. Don't let it surprise you!
- 7. ATGATT: Need I say more?
- 6. Riding Partners: Choose them wisely. Never be afraid to turn down a ride with someone whose riding style isn't compatible with yours.
- 5. Helmets: More than just ATGATT. Put on your head what your brain and face are worth.
- 4. Tires, Tires: Only because they are what make you go, make you stop and keep you upright. Check pressures religiously. Inspect tires either after every ride or before the next one. Never, EVER show up around me with the inner cord/belt exposed. I have a camera and your tire WILL end up in the next safety article!
- 3. Passengers: You are responsible for their safety. You don't want their injury or death on your mind for the rest of your life. Make sure they are ATGATT. When they are on your bike, you should ride like their life is in your hands (because it is).
- 2. Other Drivers: They are nuts. They are preoccupied. They don't see us. Respect that and never forget it. ... and my most important safety tip is...
 - 1. Look In The Mirror! No one is ultimately responsible for your safety on two wheels except you. Are you ready? Examine your riding style? Are you balancing risk and safety? Get some advanced training. If you already have advanced training, get some more. When you're riding, if your ego or adrenalin starts to get the best of you, step up for yourself and rein in your riding. You've got family and a lot of friends who want to keep you around. Don't disappoint them!

Ride Safe!

<u>Doug Westly</u> – Safety Editor



Florida News

South Director's Report

IT'S ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD!!

Well, September came and went without a single storm, again!! One could get use to this lack of hurricanes!! Certainly helps us when it comes time to ride...

We had our last two brunch rides this month. The Central ride was back to the East Lake Fish



Van VanSteelant



ride to here last year!! Nonetheless, a good time was had by the small group.

Camp. Our brunch ride didn't match the numbers we had for our lunch

And we had a similarly small crowd for our last brunch ride of the

summer to the Sebring Diner. The weather may have been a factor for that ride, as the Eastsiders left on damp roads, but only encountered a brief



At Sebring Diner

sprinkle along the east side of Lake Okeechobee!! Or, perhaps some were prepping for the SE Rendezvous!! I heard nothing but good things about that weekend!!

What's Next??

If you thought September was packed with MSTA opportunities, look what we have in store for October!! We go back to LUNCH rides on Oct. 4th, with a ride to <u>Lake Harris Hideaway</u> in Tavares, FL. The roads around this place and the pleasant setting are not to be missed! For the adventurous, Oct. 10-12th offers the 10th Anniversary of the <u>Barber Vintage Festival</u> in Leeds, AL!! Back in our own backyard, Oct. 18-19th highlights the AIMExpo event in Orlando!! This Just-For-Fun Event is supported by both our National EC and our own FL MSTA chapter!! Much more about this spectacle elsewhere in this newsletter. And to close out the month, on Oct. 25th, we will return to the Sebastian Beach Inn, right on the Atlantic Ocean!! As an added bonus, I plan to visit the Navy/Seal Museum in Ft. Pierce on the ride home. This place honors the humble beginnings of the UDT's during WW II through to today's SEAL program. You know, the ones in the news seemingly every three months or so!!

So, be sure to check out our new website all month long so you do not miss any of the action!! www.flmsta.org

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:

- Anita and Paul Buxe, Palm Beach Gardens
- Bruce Lyon, Palm Beach Gardens
- Barry Simon, Tamarac
- Betty and Fred Thayer, Hobe Sound



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

• Thomas Blake

• Neil Fogelberg

• Stephen Grasso

• Paul Heydemann

• Stephen Evans

• Steve Gollihugh

• Brian Gyoerkoe

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. We have had an uptick in bounced emails lately, and most likely it's a simple fix to get back in the loop.

Random Ramblings!

Read the promo blurb below concerning the AIMExpo event.

"AIMExpo is now the largest show of its type in North America with exhibit space growth of more than 40 percent, and the number of exhibitors at more than 460. Pre-registration of dealer/trade attendees is triple last year, and advance ticket sales to consumers are more than double 2013. Interest continues to grow each day and companies looking to take advantage of the AIMExpo platform should contact an AIMExpo Account Manager toll free at 855-MCShows (855-627-4697)."

Did you catch the bit about advanced ticket sales are more than double 2013?!? What's nice about holding the event at the Orange County Convention Center, there is plenty of exhibition space to expand into, so the show won't feel more crowded than last year!! This show is not to be missed!! And FL MSTA will have a front row seat to all of the action!! We have a booth that will be "manned" by our EC and others on Thursday and Friday, when the event is open to trade and media only. Our own FL membership takes over hosting duties on Sat. and Sun. with a slew of volunteers! We still need a few more... Contact me ASAP. Did I mention you get free admission for your efforts at our booth?!? Take in the show, talk to some interesting people about MSTA, and you've had a great day "motorcycling"!! You can connect to the show website through our own new site www.flmsta.org. Take some time to look at the diversity of the vendors and manufactures on the floor map!!

As we head into our "winter" riding season, be sure to brush up on your skills that may have been untested by a laid back summer schedule. It's always a good idea to do a self-check of the fundamentals in a clean, dry parking lot. You just might surprise yourself at how easily our skills become a little rusty!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

We are still in need of a member to take of the position of Central Director. Please contact Van if interested.

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 <u>Event Calendar</u> 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, **October 4**th, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm

Where: <u>Lake Harris Hideaway</u> – 11912 Lane Park Road, Tavares, FL 32778 **2**352-343-3585 (map) Description: This is a great place to start up the Florida riding season! Check your maps as there are nice roads in all

directions. This place is tucked in among the cypress trees of Lake Harris with a beautiful view of the

water. Bike friendly with plenty of parking. Come on...get out and ride!

As with all of our rides the group size is unpredictable. We have had 5 people at this location on up to 20+.

The place is large and I have never been there when they could not accommodate us.

Contact: Bob - boju29@msn.com

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **October 25th**, Noon -1:00 pm

Where: Sebastian Beach Inn − 7035 S. Hwy. A1A, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951 \$\frac{1}{2}\$321-728-4311 (map)

Description: This place is dreamy!! On the ocean, outside seating, great grub and service!! And the Southies

just might meet up with some of our more adventurous Northies!! NOTE: LUNCH schedule

starts again!!

For those heading south to go home can join me in visiting the Navy/SEAL Museum in Ft. Pierce. We ride right by the place!! It's open until 4PM on Saturdays, so we should have enough time

tour the exhibits after our lunch. Check it out at www.navysealmuseum.org

Contact: Van - busavan@flahsta.org or \$\infty\$561-386-2594

AIM Expo

The <u>American International Motorcycle Expo</u>, being held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, will be open to the public on October 18th and 19th. Several vendors will offer demo rides on various motorcycles and other vehicles. Additionally, there will be the inaugural "Retro Affair, Vintage Motorcycle Show" to showcase historic, restored and customized American, Japanese and European motorcycles built before 1984.

For further information, visit their website at the link above.

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, **November 8**th, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm

Where: The Perfect Spot – 1600 Flightline Blvd., Deland, FL 32724 ■386-734-0088 (map)

Description: The Perfect spot is one of our coolest lunch ride destinations. It is located right at the Deland Airport at

their world famous sky diving school. It's a sports bar/restaurant with a sky diving theme. The landing spot

is right off the deck of the restaurant. Bike parking right up front. Take a lesson...learn to jump!

Contact: Bob - boju29@msn.com



MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **November 15**th, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Where: **T.B.A.**

Description: Check the Florida MSTA <u>website</u> for updates

Contact: Van - <u>busavan@flahsta.org</u> or \$\mathbb{\textit{2561-386-2594}}

Regional Events

During the Fall riding season, you may wish to attend popular regional MSTA events being held in areas with fantastic riding on nice, twisting roads through some beautiful scenery.

Fall Colors Ride

When: Friday, October 3rd – Sunday, October 5th, 2014

Where: Quality Inn − 540 S Jefferson St., Lewisburg, West Virginia 24901 \$\mathbb{\alpha}\$304-645-7722

Description: Meet with fellow MSTA members and ride the great roads of West Virginia! The special room rate

of \$71.99 for a non-smoking double, including a continental breakfast, will also apply to the block of 30 rooms being held for Thursday the 2nd if you want to come early. Call the Quality Inn to

make reservations. Be sure to mention MSTA for the group discount.

Turn by turn route sheets and GPS coordinates for the event routes will be provided. There will also be some dual sport routes available. Visit the <u>MSTA-SE website</u> for more information.

Contact: Syd Mayes – bldrman4@yahoo.com or \$\alpha 804-265-8636 or 804-721-3399 (Cell)

Barber Vintage Festival

The 10th Anniversary of the <u>Barber Vintage Festival</u> will take place from Friday, October 10th to Sunday, October 12th at the Barber Race Track in Leeds, near Birmingham, AL (map).

For further information, visit their website at the link above.

Member Profile

We would like to publish additional 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 <u>editor</u> 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 on page 10.

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, <u>click here</u> to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page.

MSTA website information on upcoming sanctioned events: <u>click here</u>. For Just-For-Fun events: <u>click here</u>.

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.



This month's Mystery Hyperlink and this link are in keeping with our safety article.

Also check out this other webpage for new riders.

CLASSIFIED ADS

2013 Triumph Explorer

Only 2,800 miles – Showroom condition.

Price: \$11,800 includes:

- Triumph OEM side Panniers (not shown in photo)
- Triumph OEM Engine Guards
- Triumph Hand Guards
- Arrow Muffler, stock muffler included
- Heated Seat
- Heated Grips
- Batzen Windshield Brackets
- 20mm Lowering links, stock links included



Contact: Don Later, **₹** donlater@bellsouth.net



2008 BMW F800ST w/ABS

Blue, saddle and tank bags, heated grips, **18,300 miles.** Dropped, but gently, just a few scratches.

\$6,700.



Contact: Judy Erickson 2813-468-0288 (MSTA 11900 RG)

Corbin Saddle for 2013-14 Triumph Trophy SE

I wish to sell a beautiful, nearly new <u>Corbin Dual Touring Saddle with Heat</u> in silver carbon fiber w/silver thread, vinyl (#T-TRY-13-E). I am also including the Corbin rider backrest (#02-SB). I bought this seat in April from another Trophy owner. After trying it out on a long weekend tour, I decided that it doesn't quite suite me.

List prices are \$593 for the seat + \$218 for the backrest = \$811.

I am asking only \$550 for seat with backrest, or \$500 for seat alone, including ground shipping within the US.



Click on photos for larger versions

Contact: Don Moe, \$\mathbb{\alpha}\$561-346-1009, \$\overline{\overline{\alpha}}\$ editor@flmsta.org

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

