



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of
the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 7 Issue 12

Events in November

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Feature Article

Touring Tip: Just A Ridin' In The Rain

By James T. Parks



Many, if not most, of us consider riding in the rain a necessary inconvenience when we're caught out in it while going from point A to point B. The experience is frequently made more burdensome because of: inadequate riding gear, reduced vision of scenery and road hazards, loss of traction, increased navigational challenges and fogged glasses and face shield, just to name a few. Often we discover too late that we forgot to pack defogger, rain mittens or some other item critical to reducing the discomfort and increased risk of riding in the rain.

It's my contention, however, that riding in the rain is often less pleasant than it really has to be, partially because we avoid doing it unless forced to ride in the wet. But like most of motorcycling's other acquired skills, practice almost always leads to a better riding experience. In that vein, here are my top 10 tips for improving your rain riding proficiency and, yes, even enjoyment:

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.

We wish you all safe and fun rides!

Don Moe, Editor

1 Expect Rain: Even if the sun is out, and there's not a cloud in the sky before leaving home, expect the possibility of rain during any ride that lasts more than a couple of hours. That means riders should almost always pack rain gear. And, by the way, most textile riding gear that says it's rain resistant, or even waterproof, usually isn't in long, soaking rainfall. So pack your rain gear!



Jim Park in the rain on the Dragon

2 Trust Your Tires: One of the biggest phobias of inexperienced riders, once pavement becomes wet, is that their tires will rapidly lose traction. The soft rubber composition of motorcycle tires (especially compared to car tires) means that most of them retain about 80% of their dry pavement traction. The presence of oil, antifreeze or any one of a number of other chemical substances on rain-slick roads, however, can significantly compromise traction. If wet pavement appears to have a reflective sheen, these chemicals may be present.

3 Avoid Plastic Stripes on Pavement: Pedestrian crossings and some other road markings are actually white plastic strips adhered to the pavement. These stripes become slippery when wet. The same is true for metal road surface coverings, tar snakes, wooden planks at railroad crossings and other similar road materials not made of asphalt or concrete. If these hazards cannot be avoided, then ride over them at a right angle, at moderate speed, with the bike perpendicular to the road surface.



Road striping

Photo: [Durham Region, Ontario](#)

4 Treat Your Face Shield: Recently I was caught in the rain without any treatment for my face shield. The rain accumulated in drops, diminishing my ability to see down the road in what, already, was a low light situation. I regularly use plastic polish to keep the surface of my face shield slippery, allowing water droplets to be largely blown away by the wind. I've used Rain-X on occasion, but it is designed for glass and doesn't work well on a plastic face shield. It's a good idea to treat your shield before beginning any ride. If your shield fogs up, don't open it completely, because that will enable rain droplets to deposit on the inside that are hard to clear without stopping and removing the helmet to do so. Make sure all helmet vents are open and only crack the shield slightly to increase airflow and exhaust condensation.



Photo: [Rider Magazine](#)

5 Inspect Rain Gear Integrity: Over time rain gear can lose its ability to repel water. I learned this lesson once, the hard way, when my dated rain gear began leaking during a daylong ride in heavy rain. The

combination of riding wet in the wind caused me to lose body heat, become chilled and then sick enough that I couldn't continue riding the next day. Nowadays I replace worn rain gear regularly and buy suits with heavy gauge material.

6 Be Visible: I will never understand why some OEMs make black rain gear, particularly the jacket. It's hard enough to see riders in rainy, low light conditions, without making them virtually invisible to human sight. If your rain gear top isn't especially colorful or visible, wear a high-viz vest on top of it. Because most other vehicles will have their lights turned on in the rain, reflectors also will improve other motorist's ability to see and avoid you.

7 Slow Down: Although a relatively small amount of traction is lost on clean wet pavement, it still makes sense to ride more carefully in the rain by avoiding: (1) excessive speed; (2) steep lean angles; (3) close proximity to other vehicles; and (4) aggressive stopping maneuvers.

8 Don't Push Your Luck: It's one thing to ride in rain, but quite another to ride into a thunderstorm or even a heavy downpour. Because your riding risk factors are already heightened in rainy conditions, know when to get off the road and take shelter. Remember, your rubber tires won't provide any protection in the event of a lightning strike and there's nothing between you and flying debris picked up by high winds. Common sense should tell you when it's time to "fold 'em."

9 Practice: Here's a radical idea: go riding in the rain, even when you don't have to! As is true with most other motorcycle riding skills, practice improves ability, confidence and enjoyment of the experience. The same is true for riding in the rain. Practice effective rain riding techniques close to home so they will be second nature when you need them on a road trip.



Dianne Park in the rain on the Dragon

10 Learn to Enjoy the Experience: The rhythmic pitter-patter of raindrops, while ensconced in a warm dry cocoon, can be both enjoyable and relaxing. It only can be so, though, after mastering tips 1 through 9 above. I've heard of some motorcyclists, who enjoy rain riding so much, they actually look forward to rainy days in the saddle.

Long story short, a rainy day doesn't mean that your two-wheeled adventure has to stop being safe and enjoyable.

James T. Parks, MSTA member since 2001 and photo-journalist at RoadRUNNER Motorcycle Touring & Travel magazine since 2003. Jim's three great passions in life, besides his wonderful family, are motorcycle touring, writing, and photography. Riding a used 1963 Honda Dream at age 17, he never dreamed that many years hence, all three passions would coalesce into an actual job.

Reprinted courtesy of RoadRUNNER Motorcycle Touring & Travel magazine (www.roadrunner.travel). RoadRUNNER Magazine is a bimonthly motorcycle touring publication packed with exciting travel articles, splendid photography, route maps and other features that help ensure wonderful two-wheeled adventures. Subscriptions are available on our website and by calling (866) 343-7623.

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.

A Typical Riding Day

Becky and I just finished a local ride today. We had 30 riders on a beautiful Sunday morning, headed 2 hours away to a favorite lunch spot. For safety, we broke the riders up into five (5) separate groups, and had them depart about five (5) minutes apart. I led the first group out, and Becky led the last group. Along the way, I made some mental notes on ride events, just as thoughts on safety.

First off, never over-estimate a group's riding capabilities. Remember that you always ride to the level of the least-experienced and capable rider. I goofed today by taking my group at a fairly quick pace down some technical back road routes, and in the process leaving a group member way behind. We had to pull over and wait for him to catch up. Needless to say, I went back and apologized to him, and then eased off on the pace a little. Mea Culpa...

Always, ALWAYS anticipate the weather, particularly in winter. When we left the house this morning it was 49 degrees and I was in full leathers. Fortunately I had checked the weather and packed a complete set of armored mesh riding gear to switch into for the return ride. Good thing, as it was almost 80 degrees on the way home.

Remember that group stops during a ride always take longer than planned. What does this have to do with safety? Everything! If you don't plan in enough stop time, then you start rushing, things get forgotten, left out, you maybe start pushing the pace too hard to make up time, etc.

While we're in the "Always" category, make sure you take a look at everyone's bike when they arrive at the morning meet spot. We found one bike with a rear tire showing cord. If there is a good side to this story, it's that the rider was the wife of another on the ride, so she parked her bike and they went two-up for the ride on his steed.

Halfway back in the afternoon, at the planned rest stop, we had a rider all of a sudden needing a tool to fix a bike issue. Viola! I dove into my GS' giant panniers and produced the right tool for the job. Make sure you carry your emergency stuff!

The lunch stop was right by a beautiful river, but it was off-pavement parking. Fortunately I knew this in advance, and brought along a dozen parking pucks for those in need. Yes, I gave a puck. (Groan)

And how did I know about the parking in advance? Easy! Becky and I anticipated it was going to be a big ride, and we pre-ran the route the day before. We checked the GPS route file to make sure it was accurate, made sure the roads were good, checked out the lunch stop parking, and also timed the route. That way we knew just how long it would take, found any potential ride safety issues that we could brief before the start, etc.

Just a typical day of riding, made safer and more fun with a little planning and effort!

Ride Safe!

[Doug Westly](#) – Safety Editor

Florida News

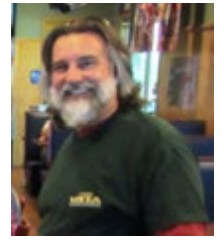
South Director's Report

WELL, THE WEATHER OUTSIDE IS FRIGHTFUL!.....

But if you live here, you know how wonderful the weather can be when you're not shoveling five feet of snow!! Why-o-why would you live where that can happen to you?? We had two opportunities to get outside in November, with rides to DeLand and Everglades City! We try to cover the state with riding options!! You'll read about the DeLand ride elsewhere in this issue.

The Nov. 15th ride to [Camellia Street Grill](#) in Everglades City went very well. We had 10+ bikes meet up in Royal Palm Beach and we made our way west and south along as many country roads as we could find. Mind you, there is only one way to "back country" ride to Everglades City, so the GPS wasn't sweating it!! Our group enjoyed the few curves available, once we cleared the mess on the roads we encountered due to the sugar cane harvest. After a few miles, we had fine conditions all the way to the restaurant!! I'll apologize now for to some of the riders who did not get the updated email in time to know that we had to change the venue. It was last minute, but we all did manage to enjoy a wonderful lunch waterside at a truly pleasant eatery!! As a last minute substitute, we couldn't have found a better place!! Our 50/50 raffle was another hit, raising \$16 for the Club, and \$16 for a very promising prospect/new member, Mark Turkel!! We now have \$436.00 in the account. Thanks to all who participate!!

After lunch, five of us made our way to the Western Everglades National Park ranger station and nature center. We made the 1:30 pm boat as planned, and enjoyed a SPECTACULAR!! hour and a half tour of the nearby shore/islands/Gulf and more than a few dolphins!!! The temperature, the wind, the Captain, the wildlife.... The perfect ending to a wonderful lunch!!



Van VanSteelant



Heading out to the Gulf...



Dolphins surface alongside the boat



L→R: Ellen Kocher, Judy Powers, Dianne Park

What's Next??

We have two rides scheduled for December!! Both happen early enough in the month to not interfere with your holiday plans!! On Dec. 6th, make your way to [Gator Joe's](#) in Lake Weir in Ocklawaha, FL. A spectacular location, great food and fun roads!! A week later, we will ride to the [Lone Cabbage Fish Camp](#) in Cocoa, FL. Another waterside location, with an added bonus of air boat rides along the St. Johns River!! Get ALL the details, info and savings coupon at our new website, www.flmsta.org

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...

Random Ramblings!

Here's one last bit of info about the AIMExpo event!! Quite the summary!! aimexpousa.com/2014-recap

If you somehow missed the news about our newest volunteer, here's what we wrote last month: We have a new Central Florida Co-State Director!! Over the course of the AIMExpo weekend, Teresa Vipond stepped forward to take the helm of our central location!! Teresa and her husband, Tim, reside in DeLand and are independent representatives for AMSOIL lubricants. They were once State Directors for Texas, so she will be hitting the ground at a full sprint in her new role here in Florida. Be sure to make the next lunch ride and welcome our newest volunteer!!! Thanks Teresa!!

Our member, Bobby Shields, sent this timely info along. It's from Revzilla.com Here's part of their article on group riding.

1: Discuss the route ahead of time

This seems simple enough, but it's incredible how many times I've met up with people and just told to follow someone. Too often, in the resulting confusion, someone ends up cutting across four lanes of traffic to make a freeway exit. Are we taking the 710 to the 60 to the 101 or the 405 to the 110 to the 101? Do you want to try the 10 because there's a Dodgers game? Cool. Now if something happens or I lose sight of you for two seconds, I can ride to where I know you'll be, instead of trying to follow where you are.

2: It is the front guy's job to wait for the rear guys, not the rear guy's job to keep up

More often than not, it's the fast guy leading the group, especially if the day is more about the ride than the destination. I've been in way too many groups where the front guy starts to have a little fun while the guys behind him are almost killing themselves trying to keep up. Set the expectation that the front guy will pull over for a stop if he gets too far ahead. When coming to an intersection, for example, if each person waits, before making a turn, until the next person catches up, then no one will get lost, wondering which way the pack went.

The bottom line is that everybody should feel free to ride their own ride, not pressured to take risks to keep up with a faster rider. Nobody should have to worry about getting lost or left behind because they don't have the same skill level.

3: Look for communication

Make it a habit to check in with the people riding around you more often. You never know when one of your buddies has been trying to wave you down for 15 minutes because you forgot to secure your chinstrap.

4: Stay in order

I know this one sounds dumb. Part of why you ride a motorcycle is to enjoy the freedom it brings, but stay in order. Most of the accidents I've seen while riding in groups resulted from someone thinking they could pass a buddy or move around someone only to have the guy in front of them ride directly into that spot. If your buddy slams on the breaks to look at a duck, you slam on the brakes to look at a duck. Sure, this will mean you're at the mercy of your riding buddy's love of stopping and ducks, but it also means that he will be confident you'll never hit them from behind.

5: Give each other some space

Giving your fellow riders space means you can both set up properly for corners. Riding side by side or in a rigid staggered formation on curvy roads just means nobody will be on the optimum line. If you know where the people you're with are going — and you should — you're not going to get lost. There is literally zero reason to ride directly off the rear tire of the guy in front of you, and doing so greatly decreases the time you have to react if things get weird. Your buddy will not be impressed by how perfectly you can stay nine inches off his rear tire. He'll just be stressed by your riding.

Again, this isn't a comprehensive list for how to ride in groups. If you've never ridden in a group and really have no idea how to do it, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation has a wonderful and boring guide on the general principles. These tips are things I actually put into practice on a weekly basis to make riding with buddies a little safer, a little more enjoyable, and a lot less likely to end up on YouTube. Thanks again to Bobby for sending this along!!

These are tried and true points. We try to include them in our pre-ride meetings. You really should be at our rendezvous locations in time to participate in our rider's meetings. You'll be sure to be on the "same page" as the rest of the group, and you're sure to be less stressed during the ride!!

Ride well! Ride often! Do it safely!!

ATGATT Van
MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report

We are pleased to introduce our new Central-Florida Director: Teresa Vipond.

"My husband, Tim, & I have been avid motorcyclists for nearly 40 years. We have ridden throughout the US and parts of Canada & Mexico on our ST1100 & BMW K1200s. Before retiring & moving to FL, we were South Texas State Directors for a few years. Having attended 20+ STARS, we've made many lifelong friendships with other MSTA members. We're looking forward to getting to know the Florida folks."

Teresa Vipond
DeLand, FL
☎713-504-5763



Teresa at the [Ponderosa Café](#) in Hulett, WY for lunch during STAR 2014

Member Comment

Motorcycle Murphy-isms provided by Jim Park

Murphy's Law definition: *A rule that states, "If something can go wrong, it will." An addition to this law reads, "and usually at the worst time." The identity of "Murphy" is unknown, but the saying was first used during the 1940s and may have originated with members of the armed forces in [World War II](#).*

From The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition

Have you ever noticed that when you are gearing up to ride, that if you drop one of your gloves, it will always (or nearly always) fall on the opposite side of the bike from where you are standing?

This is an example of what I call a "Motorcycle Murphy-isms."

Those of you who have frequented the MSTA forum may recall a thread we had going a few forums back where contributors would share those seeming truths that we all experience while riding. I would like to share some of those experiences.

Those who have ridden with me know that I will catch 80 to 90% of traffic lights red, draw bridges in the up position and trains crossing at busy intersections. However these are not motorcycle Murphy-isms. No, the Murphy-ism is much more subtle.

For example, it's a hot summer's day. You have been riding hard and just want to get to your day's destination, but you need gas. So a gas and go is in order.

You gas up, guzzle down some water, put your jacket back on, insert your earplugs, don your helmet and you're ready to go. It is at that precise moment when you are ready to throw your leg across the bike when the Murphy-ism occurs. You are approached by a stranger who wants to share a story about when they used to ride and all of the details of their bike. Now this only occurs when it's extremely hot and you are standing in direct sunlight. This is usually paired with a series of questions about your motorcycle and how the technology has changed and queries on all of the details about where you are headed. While you politely answer questions and listen to their stories you are becoming a human meat dehydrator.

Then there's the time when you finally get to that great section of road with all of the curves. You have been riding for hours with no traffic but just as you approach your favorite twisty section a motor home or farm tractor pulls out just a few hundred yards ahead of you going the same direction! Also, the next passing zone will occur just as you get back to the boring section of highway.

Rain gear has its own special category as there are so many Murphy-isms that occur related to the vinyl stuff: Putting on raingear will keep it from raining while just the opposite will occur if you decide not to wear raingear.

You will only discover that your bike keys are in your pants pocket after you have put on your gloves, your raingear is on over your pants and all of your riding buddies are waiting for you with engines running.

This one usually occurs while donning your rain gear while on the side of the road. The little Velcro strip designed to keep your rain pants from flapping in the breeze will nearly always attach to the opposite pant leg while you are balancing on one leg... And, oh yeah, it will also start raining about the same time!

You will discover that your raingear is sitting on the workbench at home only after it starts to rain and you are 100 miles from home.

There are lots more Murphy-isms that I'm sure you can think of that I have missed. But as they say stuff (meaning Murphy-isms) happens!

Enjoy the ride. –JEP-

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, **December 6th**, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Where: [Gator Joe's](#) – 12431 SE 135th Ave, Ocklawaha, FL 32179 ☎352-288-3100 ([map](#))

Description: It does not get much better than Gator Joe's in December. A beautiful Lake Weir waterfront view not far from the Ocala National Forest. They love motorcyclists and have plenty of parking and great food. Try the Gator tail Philly!

Contact: Bob - boju29@msn.com

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **December 13th**, 11:45 am – 1:00 pm

Where: [Lone Cabbage Fish Camp](#) – 8199 State Road 520, Cocoa, FL 32926 ☎321-632-4199 ([map](#))

Description: Stop in and enjoy the surroundings of an old style Florida Fish Camp on the banks of the beautiful Saint Johns River located on State Road 520 at the Brevard and Orange county lines.

While you are here, be sure and indulge in our famous Gator Tail, Frog Legs, Turtle or Catfish. All of which are cooked to order. We have a large menu with something for everyone! Details are at twisterairboatrides.com/fishcamp.html

Here's another attraction for us to consider after our lunch!! Twister Airboat Rides at Lone Cabbage Fish Camp! They have two options. The 30-minute ride looks good! There's even a coupon ready to print that will save you \$2!! Details are at twisterairboatrides.com

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, **January 10th**, 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Where: [Castaways Bar & Grill](#) – 1575 W. SR 40, Astor, FL 32102 ☎386-749-4407 ([map](#))

Description: They have an outdoor seating area overlooking the St. Johns River. We highly recommend their specialty - lobster bisque. There is good riding with low traffic on the roads through the Ocala National Forest going west & north from Astor.

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

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sat, **January 24th**, 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Where: [The Tiki Bar](#) – Roland Martin Marina Resort, 920 E. Del Monte Ave., Clewiston, FL 33440 ☎ 863-983-3151 ([map](#))

Description: The Tiki Bar and Grill at the World Famous Roland Martin Marina & Resort offers a full lunch and dinner menu and is located right on the water and the docks at the marina, so you can enjoy Florida's best weather and our tropical atmosphere. The Tiki Bar is a favorite for bikers traveling through South Florida.

For those inclined, you can check out the Marina side of the business at: rolandmartinmarina.com. They have accommodations, fishing guides, boating info and a variety of resources about the lake and the surrounding area!!

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](#) is in keeping with our safety article.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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 ☎813-468-0288 (MSTA 11900 RG)

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