



# The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

Volume 11 Issue 12

## Events in December 2018

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## Feature Article

**700 + 28 + 8803 = 12**

By Stephen Evans

[Photos by Stephen Evans.]

That's not common core math: it's 700cc's for 28 days & 8,803 miles equals a 12 on a scale of 1 to 10.

I left at 0500 on September 7<sup>th</sup> catching some COG riding buddies up in Lake Park, Georgia & we scooted our way up I-75 thru Atlanta to US 19 & Hwy 60 to [Two Wheels](#) in Suches, Georgia for a COG rally. We arrived there at 1100, unpacked & started riding all the curves we could find for the rest of that Friday & all day Saturday. Sunday morning, September 9<sup>th</sup> came & we went our separate ways, they returning home to the Valdosta area, & I was heading west as I was starting my 3<sup>rd</sup> day of a 28 day trip. What's not to like here. ☺

I like traveling thru Mom & Pop America so my game plan was to take all back roads as much as possible. Had I not had such severe lower back pain on the 27<sup>th</sup> day, my interstate mileage would have only been about 600 for the entire 8,803 miles, but more on that later. As it worked out, my interstate mileage for the entire 8,803 miles was 1,145 miles. That along with the facts that I was only rained on once for about an hour the morning of my 26<sup>th</sup> day, I had many mornings where the temps were in the 40's, had probably 18 to 20 days without a cloud in the sky, had unbelievable scenery throughout the trip, met some really nice people & rode a little Honda NC 700X motorcycle, that performed flawlessly, all of which made for the numeral 12 on the scale.

I purchased the Honda about a year ago (used) with the plan of going back to Alaska this past June & to go up the [Dalton Hwy](#) to [Deadhorse](#), but decided to out west instead. I ended up going in September instead of June, due to open heart surgery (4-way) at the end of April, & it all worked out for the best. I was healthy, there



were less people, the temps were cooler & the colors were all out to be seen. I chose to take the Honda NC 700X because my plans were to ride off road not only in some national parks but also on some dirt/gravel roads along the way & with it weighing about 165 lbs. less than my FJR, I knew that it would be easier to handle let alone pick up if I went down. Besides that this was also going to be a “sticker trip” where I wanted to put a sticker on the bike from all the places I visited & that I did. So it was off from Suches up into Tennessee & [Hwy 156](#), among others, over into Arkansas, where I caught the [Talimana Scenic Hwy](#) (52 miles in length) into Oklahoma. Still staying on all back roads I arrived in Manitou Springs Colorado the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>.

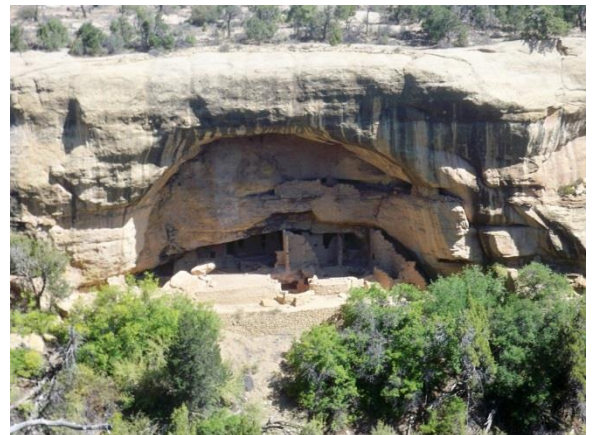
My average daily mileage was 314 which is where I wanted it due to the size of the Honda & every day was between 375 & 147 miles except one. That day, the 26<sup>th</sup> day, coming across north Texas, I did 893 miles of which 61 were interstate near Shreveport & that was a little too much on a small bike on bumpy back roads as they are not anywhere near as smooth as an interstate & my lower back paid the price. Something that had never happened to me before.

At certain stops I had scheduled 2 nights of lodging & Manitou Springs was one of them (along with the Grand Canyon, Moab (Arches & Canyonlands), & Yosemite). The following day I rode to the summit of [Pikes Peak](#) & checked out the [Garden of the Gods](#). Then it was off to ride [US Hwy 50](#) across Colorado & do [Skyline Drive](#) (which was closed with a sign & chain across the entrance) & then to do my first off road which ended up being one of the highlights of my trip. At Poncha Springs, Colorado (intersection of US 50 & US 285) you go south on US 285 about 6 miles & there you'll find [Marshall Pass Road](#). It's 32 miles of dirt, gravel & embedded rock & I cannot say enough about the beauty of this road going thru the middle of nowhere in the Colorado wilderness. Adding to the beauty was a sky with no clouds & Aspens that were in full color. It's an old stagecoach road from the 1880's & its western end brings you back to US 50 at Sargents about 30 miles east of Gunnision.

If possible you don't want to miss Marshall Pass Road or the [Tomichi Creek Trading Post](#) at Sargents, Back on US 50 thru the [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#) which runs along the [Gunnision River](#) to Montrose where I caught [US 550 South](#) (The [Million Dollar Hwy](#)) down to Ouray where I spent the night. Ouray is called the Switzerland of America & for good reason. The next day it was US 550 South from [Ouray thru Silverton & Tacoma](#) (the best section of 550 in my opinion) to Durango where I caught [US 160 West](#). My plans were to see [Mesa Verde N.P.](#) & ride thru the [Valley of the Gods](#) (17 miles) do the [Moki](#)



[Marshall Pass Road, Colorado](#)



[Cliff dwelling at Mesa Verde National Park](#)

[Dugway](#) (loved it) & spend the night at a little funky place called the [San Juan Inn & Trading Post](#) right on the San Juan River in Mexican Hat, Utah. However, I took too long at Mesa Verde so I nixed the Valley of the Gods interior road & went to [Four Corners](#) instead, which to me was somewhat of a joke. There were no customer/people skills with the Navajo women selling their wares - absolutely none. Their attitude seemed to be saying they didn't care whether I did business with them or not - so I didn't.

It's now September 17<sup>th</sup> & day 11 of my trip & my plan was to be at [Monument Valley](#) at sunrise, which I was, & ride the interior road which I was unable to do as since May of this year they no longer allow motorcycles on it. No reason was given to me by the park employees I spoke with. So it was on to the [Grand Canyon N.P.](#) & while enroute (US 160-Hwy 98-US 89 & 89A), I'd be passing thru or visiting the [Glen Canyon Dam](#), the Glen Canyon Recreation Area, Lake Powell, Horseshoe Bend, Marble Canyon, Para Canyon & the Vermillion Cliffs area. There was many a day that I went out of my way, doing extra miles, just to see certain things & places & this was one of those days. It was always well worth it. That song kept popping up in my mind – *"I'm a thousand miles from nowhere - time don't matter to me - I'm a thousand miles from nowhere & there's no place I'd rather be."* Which was exactly how I felt. It was like that verse became my theme song for the trip. As with every day out west the scenery was unbelievable & breathtaking. Everyday I'd be coming off of some mountain pass, high plateau, thru a canyon or around a curve & with what laid before me I'd be saying OMG. It was a daily occurrence.



Both "mittens" in Monument Valley at sunrise

I arrived at Jacob Lake (45 miles north of the North Rim - junction of [US 89A & Hwy 67](#)) where I had a cabin for 2 nights. I met a fellow rider named Rick, from Washington State, on a Honda Valkyrie. We started a conversation & ended up having dinner together & he decided he wanted to come with me in the morning for the sunrise at Point Imperial on the eastern part of the North Rim. We were told we needed to be there by 0600. So at 0400, I'm knockin' on his cabin door & we're off at 0430. Rick wants me to go first as we've been told that the road is very curvy in certain areas, & it was, & it's also open range so we need to be on the lookout for cattle along with deer & bison.



Grand Canyon

Rick is 6'6" & about 240 & riding a 900 lb. bike while I'm 5'7" & 160 on a 474 lb. bike - & he wants me to go first? What could possibly go wrong here? Not to worry. I think of what John Wayne once said, *"It doesn't matter how scared you are just so long as you saddle up."* So saddle up I did & we're off. Everything is fine even though it's pitch black & I mean pitch black. I'm keeping the speed at about 40/45 but I'm feeling like a firefly without a light when I come around a curve & there are 2 deer in my lane. I serve to the left, grab some brake, & one of the deer decides to run beside me for a short distance as if we're drag racing before going off to the right as his buddy did. After a few more miles, my heart, thank God I had the operation, has now returned to my chest from where it was which was up in my throat. Now we come to the ranger station at the entrance &

of course it's closed with no one there because you'd have to be an idiot to be up at this hour let alone on a bike playing "dodge em" with the locals. But we stop & look in & then just starting up again out of the corner of my left eye I see movement - **BIG** movement & I'm saying to myself - don't look, don't look. But I do look & it's a buffalo coming off the grass & is now running beside me in the other lane (again) as if we're drag racing at 15 mph. We are almost eyeball to eyeball & I grab a handful of front brake at which time s/he cuts right in front of me & heads off to the right being just as rude as a driver in Boston. Once again my heart has gone north into my throat. Rick tells me later that it was one of the funniest things he's ever seen & now I'm wondering about Rick's mind being right. We make it to Point Imperial at 9,000 feet & it's bitter cold but we are rewarded with a stunningly beautiful sunrise - all was good. Rick leaves halfway thru the day as he's on his way home but I spend the day at the North Rim checking out the park, riding some dirt roads & enjoying the solitude & the views.

It's September 19<sup>th</sup> & I'm back up into Utah (**US 89A & 89**) passing thru or visiting [Zion N.P.](#) which was like Miami-Dade County on a Friday afternoon rush hour. It's a beautiful park but you better like rubbing elbows with people. Part of the problem is that there is no two-way traffic thru its tunnels as today's big RV's won't fit in the lanes. They have to go straight down the center at the tunnels tallest point so it's like road construction where only one direction goes at a time. I continued on to [Cedar Breaks N.M.](#) on (**Hwys 14-148-143**) which were really good both in curves & scenery & then Hwy 12 into [Escalante, Utah](#) for the night. The next morning it's **Hwy 12** which was unbelievable, a 12 on the scale, thru Escalante N.M. & up to Torrey & then **Hwy 24** to [Capital Reef N.P.](#) & **Hwy 95** (rugged scenery) to [Natural Bridges N.M.](#) & into Blanding & **US 191 North** into Moab for 2 nights. If you're an outdoor person Moab would be the place to live as the area has it all. The next day it's [Arches N.P.](#) in the morning & [Canyonlands N.P.](#) (which I loved) in the afternoon.



Natural Bridges National Monument

It's September 22<sup>nd</sup> & I'm heading up into northern Utah on **Hwy 128**, which runs thru a canyon along the Colorado River to the ghost town of Cisco where I catch I-70 West over to Green River (44 miles). There I catch **US 6/191 North** up to Price & then Hwy 10 back south to Huntington & **HERE** is where it all comes together. Out of Huntington it's **Hwy 31** up to **Hwy 264** & 264 over to **Hwy 96** & 96 up & over to **US 6** & going back south to **US 191** (US 191 & US 6 had split) & then on US 191 it's back north again up to [Duchesne](#). From Duchesne I was going to take US 40 West to [Heber City](#) for the night but while filling up, an older man, yes older than me believe it or not, told me about another route which I ended up taking & he was spot on with his recommendation. It was Hwy 87 North out of Duchesne to **Hwy 35** over to **Hwy 32** to US 40 & back south to Heber City. If you are ever out in this area **PLEASE** try & work these roads (Huntington to Heber City) into your trip as this was an unbelievable & outstanding day of riding. These roads took me thru 4



Canyonlands National Park

different national forests & canyon after canyon with scenery, curves & elevation changes galore. I went over 100 miles out of my way this day & it was worth every inch.

The next day it was across Utah into Nevada to see [Great Basin N.P.](#) located outside of Baker where I was going to spend the night to see a “Dark Sky,” but being the dummy I am, I miscalculated this part & a full moon was scheduled for the very next night. It was a shame as I was going to be on [Wheeler Peak](#) at over 9,000 ft. that night & I’m sure on a night of a dark sky the viewing would be unbelievable, but it wasn’t going to happen. I ended up moving on to Ely, Nevada for the night thinking I could catch another night to star gaze. While in Ely, I saw a marijuana store & stopped in to purchase some cream & liquid for pain, that I had heard about from a couple I met at the North Rim, & I’m



[Great Basin National Park](#)

here to tell you that the stuff works. I deal with pain every single day from a horrific motorcycle accident back in 2004 & thus like anyone with this problem, we look for some miracle drug to help & the stuff I purchased did just that - it helped. However that’s another story with information which I’ll be happy to share if our paths ever cross. I rode across Nevada entirely on US 50 & ended up crossing (I believe) 4 different mountain ranges with all of their passes being in the 7,500 ft. (+/-) range & of course with that comes some great curves with the best ones being just east of Austin. It was my first time across Nevada on US 50 ([The Loneliest Road in America](#)) & I was unaware of the mountains so it was a very pleasant surprise. Then it was on into Markleeville, California for the night with both Yosemite & Death Valley on the horizon.

South of [Lake Tahoe](#) it was Hwy 89 into Markleeville (pop 210) & then the following day it was Hwy 89 to Hwy 4, traveling southwest, to Hwy 49 & down to Sonora & there catching Hwy 108, traveling back northeast, up & thru [Sonora Pass](#) to US 395 South & Bridgeport for the evening. The mileage from Markleeville to Bridgeport is 63 miles but I ended up doing 198 miles that day as once again I went out of my way & it was worth every inch. Hwy 4 is a must do as it takes you up & over 2 mountain passes with beautiful scenery & many curves of which some are very technical. Adding to that the road narrows down to only a lane & a half wide for quite a distance & it can get somewhat hairy going around a blind curve & meeting a Ford F-150 coming the opposite direction & taking more than his share of the road. Yes, it was close.



[El Capitan in Yosemite National Park](#)

Leaving Bridgeport early, wanting to see the sunrise, I was southbound on US 395 to [Tioga Pass Road](#). I chose to enter Yosemite on this road from the east as it was 52 miles to Yosemite Valley & Tioga Pass Road was a beautiful 52 miles. I chose to leave the same way as with many roads, it’s different going one way verses the other & going back east I’d see it differently, which was the case. It was also recommended to me by a park employee & in fact I thought it was more beautiful going out than coming in. The same park employee told me about a loop road to take once back on US 395 South towards [Mammoth Lakes](#) which would take me back into

the hills with lakes, curves & more of those colorful Aspens. Both he & the older man in Duchesne were spot on.

It's now Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, day 22 of my trip, & I leave Mammoth Lakes on US 395 South heading to [Death Valley](#) & as with every other day so far the scenery is unbelievable. I found the eastern half of Death Valley many times more beautiful than the western half plus there are mountain ranges to get over so of course that means more curves & distant views that seem to go on forever. After Furnace Creek [Hwy 190](#) splits & I chose to take Badwater Road to the south to see Artist Drive (very colorful) & Badwater Basin which is 282 ft. below sea level. I continued on east & spent the night in Pahrump, Nevada.

According to the [International Dark Sky Association](#), Great Basin & Death Valley are two of the five best places to see a dark sky in the lower 48. I really goofed in my timing for Great Basin so I thought I'd give it another shot now. I'm up early & leaving the hotel at 0310 & riding 25 miles back west into the desert to see my "Dark Sky". But it's not going to happen as the moon is still too bright looking to be about two thirds or brighter. So I decide to park off road a ways on some dirt/gravel & stay near the bike. There was no one around, no city lights, no vehicles, no sounds, nothing but total quiet & stillness. Even though the moon was still too bright it was a beautiful clear night & I'm loving the moment as I'm in the middle of nowhere & the desert's emptiness & stillness was a real treat. I could have laid down & asked for nothing more.

Later that morning I visit [Hoover Dam](#) & cross the [Colorado River](#) going back into Arizona & down to [Kingman](#) where I caught [Route 66](#) going back west to [Oatman](#) (pop 128). There is many a mountain curve on this 58 mile (RT) section of Route 66 from Kingman to Oatman & back. The road & the town were well worth the effort. Oatman is a town that looks lost in time & it's famous for two things. Clark Gable & Carol Lombard spent their honeymoon at the Oatman Hotel & there are donkeys/burros (2 names for the same animal) that come into town everyday looking for handouts. The ancestors of these animals were left in the area over 100 years ago when the miners left after the gold ran out. Needless to say one must be careful where they ride, park & walk. I play tourist by buying some stickers & petting/feeding (pellets & some people bring baby carrots) the animals & then its back on Route 66 thru Kingman over to Seligman where I stop for a soda at [Delgadillos Snow Cap](#) (very much old Route 66) & then on to Williams for the night. While riding this part of Route 66, I was treated to many of the old [Burma-Shave](#) signs.

On the morning of Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, I'm on [Hwy 89A](#) going east thru the town of [Jerome](#) (both of which should not be missed) over to [Hwy 260](#) across northern Arizona, which in my opinion is a very scenic road thru beautiful country, to [US 191 South](#) down to Alpine (pop 145). US 191 is also called the [Coronado Trail Scenic Byway](#). The next morning was somewhat special. It had rained in the area & as I was loading my bike, at 0600 with the sun coming up behind the motel, across the street I had the viewing pleasure of a full rainbow & the listening pleasure of elk after elk bellowing out their call & the area is full of them. They were going non-stop. It was a one-time moment & I just stood there & took it all in. Then it was south on US 191 which is a motorcyclists dream as in one 90 mile section it has over 400 curves & in another 123 mile section, including the 90, it has 525 curves along with many an elevation change. US 191 runs right thru the [largest copper mine](#) in North America located at Morenci & the government has already moved US 191 once for the mining operation (think about that) & I believe from what I saw it's about to happen again. I had to ride thru muck, behind a pilot car, along with those SUPER SIZED yellow dump trucks as 191 had just disappeared for about a half a mile or so. I'm now at [Three Way](#), Arizona where I catch [Hwy 28 East](#) taking me thru Black Jack

Canyon & Needles Eye over thru Mule Creek, New Mexico (think Deals Gap for 25 miles here) ☺ & more back roads to I-25 South down to [Las Cruces](#).

Tuesday morning, October 2<sup>nd</sup> & I'm wide awake at 0300 so I decide to get started. I head east from Las Cruces on back roads & make it to Shreveport for the night which was 893 miles of which 61 were interstate. The following day it was 67 miles on I-20 to Ruston & then down to Winnfield where I caught US 84 East. My game plan was to take US 84 across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama to Thomasville Georgia & catch US 19 down to Monticello, Florida & US 90 home to Lake City. All back roads. However, I had such extreme lower back pain, which I've never had before, I decided to get off the back roads & head south from Natchez, Mississippi on US 61 to Baton Rouge & I-10 home. It turned out to be the best decision I could have made as US 61 is a divided highway, smooth as silk, & within 30 miles my lower back pain was completely gone - it was unbelievable. Add to that the fact that as I came out of a Waffle House in Baton Rouge, I noticed cord showing on my rear tire which was not there that morning. Good luck came my way as there was a Honda Powersports [dealership](#) just one exit back. They were able to supply me with a sport bike tire in my size just to get home & I was off as fast as polished steel (think Kawasaki Ninja here). I spent the night in Daphne, Alabama & coasted home the next day. However west of Tallahassee there are some hills on I-10 & going downhill on one of them, I was able to reach the "warp 🌀 speed" of 90 mph with that sport bike tire on the rear. OK so it was downhill & I may have had a tail wind but I'm giving credit to the tire. The little Honda had nothing more to give but the G Forces were unbelievable.

I believe this was the best trip I've ever taken & I've taken some good ones starting way back in 1976. This trip was jammed packed with things to do & some of you may think that I had too much on my plate & you'd be correct. I believe there is really no way one can fully see & experience a national park & all that it offers in just a day. But I knew that going in & I also knew that on the really important ones, to me, I'd spend a full day & all the others I'd spend a half a day & it worked out perfect. In every single national park, & there were 10, I was able to ride the entire road(s) system & get off to read every historical marker, information post, take in the overlooks, explore some on foot & take pictures. I was also able to ride off road in certain parks for short distances. Many of my days were long but each morning I was up & at 'em in good spirits & well rested. I don't believe it would have happened without the open heart surgery as my energy level was higher than it's been in a couple of years. I was told that the operation gives me 10 to 15 more years & I have a friend who is in his 20<sup>th</sup> year from having one. This is all good because at my old age, I no longer have any peer pressure & thus I don't have to act responsible. I was lucky in my research to find some unbelievable "motorcycle roads" to ride & the good ones are highlighted in this article for your information. There were no phones, no computers, no Fox News, in a couple of places no TV, & after the 5<sup>th</sup> day, I didn't even know the date nor did I care. Every day was wonderful & everything just seemed to fall into place. Mentally I was a thousand miles from nowhere & it was right where I wanted to be.

**Editor's Request:**

If you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share with other riders your experiences and some photos from your journey, please contact me at [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org) to discuss publishing an article. I can offer assistance in preparing your article. Thanks!

## **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.*

### **When to Say No**

We were scheduled to head out on a ride yesterday morning, and at the last minute I decided to cancel it. I just wasn't in the right frame of mind to be on two wheels.

Motorcyclists often use their passion for two wheels as an escape from everyday life. Riding can help clear our minds, take our focus off of frustrating daily issues, and just generally make us feel better. Sometimes however, it is those very issues that may (and should) preclude us from putting on our gear and getting on a bike.

Have you ever noticed that your riding reflects your current feelings or state of mind? If you're happy and content, you find yourself singing inside your helmet? (Yeah, I do that. It's not pretty...) On the other hand, if you're frustrated or angry, does your riding become more intense?

Our physical riding skills and capability are dependent on a number of factors. Training, experience, frequency of riding, recent riding time, bike type, condition and riding environment all play a part in how we ride. However, our mental capabilities and specifically our state of mind also have a large impact on how we ride.

Even though we may use riding as an escape from our daily routines, if we're not in the right mental state to focus on our riding, AND our emotions may get the better of us while we're on the bike, then it may be a better idea to not strap on a helmet and go roaring off onto the public streets. The question becomes...how do we know when it's not the right time to get on the bike?

I'm not a psychologist, and I am certainly not qualified to issue hard and fast guidelines about when or when not to get on a motorcycle. On the other hand, here is my personal approach to the problem.

If I find that I am not looking forward to riding just for the enjoyment of being on two wheels, then I start questioning my motivation. When I realize that I'm thinking of the ride as more of a task than a pleasure (other than for work), then I start to wonder if I'm doing the right thing by going for a ride. If I am upset about an issue, and the focus of my thoughts is the issue rather than the ride as I start getting ready to head out, then I know I'm distracted and shouldn't be on the bike.

The bigger challenge is not only recognizing that you're not focused on the ride, but actually making the decision not to ride. It's easy to say "I don't care. I'm going to ride." It's a lot harder to make the decision not to ride.

Safe motorcycling means being focused on your riding. You can't be distracted by other issues. You can't allow your emotions (other than being happy and carefree!) to rule how you ride. Being a safe and responsible motorcyclist means knowing when to make the decision not to ride, no matter how nice the weather is, or whether or not your riding group expects you to be there.

Know when to say no...to yourself.

**Ride Safe!**

**Doug Westly – Safety Editor**



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Preoccupied?

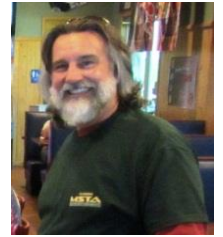


## Florida News

### South Director's Report

#### GIVING THANKS...

Ah, November weather... *thank you!* Continued support of the FL MSTA by a great bunch of members!! *Thank you!!* New friends and members... *thank you!!* And a core of support by several key players who volunteer their time, various expertises, and their "atta-boys" without expectations... Case in point, catch up with Tom's outstanding report below!!



Van VanSteelant

#### THANK YOU ALL!!

Speaking of ahhh weather, if you joined us on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> at the OK Corral Gun Club, you witnessed the best riding weather in 7 months!! We had nearly 30 friends and members meet up for a great grub and lots of gab!! We did miss a few on the sign-up sheet with some later arrivals...



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What we didn't miss was a beautiful, though short, ride from the usual Southie departure spot. With two loose groups, we had 11 bikes roll into our special parking area, right at the front door! Check out the [short videos](#) on our [PHOTO site](#)!! In typical form, their event organizer, Heather, had everything in place. It is such a pleasure working with the whole organization. Four tables reserved in our own corner of the Ballroom, trays of Cowboy Buffet at the ready, properly filled/refilled glasses left us free to roam the room and catch up with riders from all over the State! I heard more than one suggestion that we schedule two rides a year to this destination. We're kicking around a few ideas for next year...



© James Scott S 2018

And a few of us hung around to take advantage of the shooting/target ranges as well. I managed to hit better than 50% of the clays... And lots of bullets of many calibers were used over at the pistol range!!

With this sizable crowd, our 50/50 raffle was well funded! Our winner, first time visitor Nir Frucht, took home \$65!! His good friends and inviters, James and Laura, were rewarded with a free lunch... And we now have

\$1,262.00 in our kitty. As always, a big **THANK YOU** to all who participate!! A few serious donation suggestions have been presented... Send yours along.

## What's Next??

Be sure to check our RIDES calendar often to insure you never miss one of our events!! [www.flmsta.org](http://www.flmsta.org) The Central and South Ride destinations and dates are now set through January! The whole of next year will be posted by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>. We have some new ideas and places in mind!! Read on...

We are in "holiday" mode, so our rides are front loaded over the next few months. First up, the Central Lunch Ride happens at the **Swamp House Riverfront Grill**, at 488 W Highbanks Rd, in DeBary.

Be there Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>, a little earlier than usual. Tom will see you at **11:30AM**. The next weekend, join the South Lunch Ride for our return to true favorite! Be ready for waterside dining at **Laishley Crab House**, at 150 Laishley Court, in Punta Gorda. Check out the website [www.flmsta.org](http://www.flmsta.org) to see what we have planned for January!! Tom has set up the return of an old tradition!! You'll want to **THANK** him for his efforts...

## Membership News

I have caught up with the latest membership print outs. I should have successfully culled the expired, and added the new members to my contact info. If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. The last 12 months presented membership challenges for everybody in the Club. Because of the tenacious efforts of the Membership Committee, we are running through 2018 with a clean slate and smooth riding!!

My heartfelt THANKS to Don Moe for his efforts EVERY month to bring our Florida membership up to date with all the news about our new and renewing members!!

## Here's what we know today...

No new Florida riders joined the MSTA in November.

These ten Florida memberships will expire soon or have recently expired:

Brian & Diana Dickerson	Don Mroczenski	Phillip B Ridgdill	Tulio Suarez Thillet
Stephen Evans	Hugh Palmer	Michael Sistrunk	David Sumner
Carmel Frawley	Stephen Phillips	Larry Snell	

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and to continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the membership committee at [membership@ridemsta.com](mailto:membership@ridemsta.com). Renewing or joining can be quickly and securely done online at [PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew) or [PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin) respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to Beth Hemstreet, 5560 Stone Church Court, Loveland, CO 80537, and not to the address of a prior membership director.

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our Invitation-To-Ride quad-folds! For each new member you recruit starting in 2018 and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for the motorcycle drawing at our next STAR event. Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term. Since

STAR Bucks coupons have been discontinued, members still holding coupons should plan on redeeming them at rallies or other MSTA events before the end of 2018 when they will expire.

## Random Ramblings!

Have you heard about STAR 2019?? You know, it's in our "backyard" this year... I'd save a little holiday ch\$\$r and be one of the first to register when they open the site!! And you'll want to buy a few extra raffle tickets for the bike... You'll **THANK** me later!! :)

Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

## Central Director's Report - November 2018

*As much as I like Gator Joe's, honestly, it's the roads up that way that **really** move me.*

Coming from Melbourne (3 hours SE of Ocklawaha), once past Sanford and onto 46A, the smile reappeared on my face. SR 46A turns into 44 which turns eventually to 44A heading north (mostly) toward Umatilla. Once on CR 450 (aka W Ocala St) out of Umatilla, I really needed to move my ears back. What a great road. It winds around and by a myriad of lakes, up and down hills until coming out on CR 42 – another great road. My GPS was set to "curvy roads" and it, surprisingly, routed us north from 42 onto SE 182<sup>nd</sup> Rd which became Fr 8. Scattered along Fr 8, we passed close to a dozen folks in hi-viz orange vests toting rifles. I took it that they were hunters, but no idea of what. Anyways, Fr 8 took us way northeast of Ocklawaha to a place called Moss Bluff (?) where we passed the Dam Diner (I'm told pretty good food). Then west and finally south into Ocklawaha and Gator Joe's. Never been that way before but it was a nice ride. Open this hyperlink to see [\[map\]](#).



Tom Blake

GJ's was unchanged from the last time. Still quite the eclectic place. Once we collected ten riders out in the parking lot, we made our way to the door. We settled in at tables way out at the end of the covered dock overlooking Lake Weir. Keith and Roberta were already out there. Beautiful lake view. Eventually, two more riders showed up. So, we had a respectable crowd of fourteen. Yes, I had to count four fingers twice. We were even treated to a



Before we headed inside (L→R) - Cecil, Jim, Eckart, Chuck, Alan, Carl, Bob, Roy and Steve (partially hidden). Tom on camera.

Cessna 172 (I think) on pontoons taxiing over half way across the lake before turning around and taking off coming toward us.

Two Space Coast BMW Riders, Eckart and Chuck, accompanied Steve and me from Melbourne. Chuck's last name is Berry and he was astonished to be introduced to our friend Roy Clark from the Gainesville area. No, they aren't the famous ones, but still kinda cool. I finally had the pleasure to meet David and Cecil. And Pittsburg, PA's Jerry Brenner made a showing as well, albeit late, expecting to meet up with our Lake City member, Steve. Carl and Alan rode up from the Orlando area. Jim popped down from the Jacksonville. Bob rode up from Lakeland. I think that's everyone. Very happy to see all of you. Of course, we had a good time.



CW: Roberta, Keith and Tom



L→R: David and Bob



CW: Roy, Jim, Cecil and Alan



CW: Carl, Steve, Chuck and Eckart

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, we head to the [Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#), 488 W Highbanks Rd, DeBary, FL 32713 [map] This is a new destination for MSTA. Some of us have eaten there before and were favorably impressed. The Swamp House Grill overlooks the St. Johns River. On-line reviews are mostly excellent. Slightly pricey. Start time is moved up to 11:30 to get us in ahead of the rush – better parking options and nearer the front of the food order queue. Hope to see you there.

**Please Note: In addition to the Statewide New Year's Day Lunch Ride, we will have a separate Central ride on January 12<sup>th</sup>** to the Old Spanish Sugar Mill in De Leon Springs. This is a change. Also, the Peck's ride description has been refined and now also includes a hotel *suggestion* for LD riders to pursue on their own. Check out the Regional Events section below and the Rides calendar in our website for details.

Safe Journeys,

*Tom Blake*

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

### Central Florida December Lunch Ride

Sat., **December 8<sup>th</sup>**, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

[Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#), ([map](#))

488 W Highbanks Rd,

DeBary, FL 32713

☎ 386-668-8891

### **Florida MSTA Apparel**

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to [mstaflorida.qbstores.com](http://mstaflorida.qbstores.com). We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!!



They offer both embroidery and digital print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!!

### **Florida Rides This Month**

#### **Important Note**

Always remember to check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) and/or your email for updates on scheduled rides. Changes in times, dates, and especially locations are often out of our control and with short notice.

#### **MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride**

When: Sat., **December 8<sup>th</sup>**, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Where: [Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#), 488 W Highbanks Rd, DeBary, FL 32713 ☎ 386-668-8891 ([map](#))

Description: A new destination for MSTA. The Swamp House Grill overlooks the St. Johns River in DeBary where this amazing river looks as natural today as it did 150 years ago. On-line reviews are mostly excellent. Slightly pricey. Some of us have eaten there before and were favorably impressed. Start time is moved up to 11:30 to get us in ahead of the rush – better parking options and nearer the front of the food orders queue. Hope to see you there.

Contact: Tom Blake, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎ 321-723-2857

## [MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride](#)

When: Sat., **December 15<sup>th</sup>**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
Where: [Laishley Crab House](#), 150 Laishley Court, Punta Gorda, FL 33950 ☎941-205-5566 ([map](#))  
Description: We always have fun in this area of Florida...  
This restaurant has been a favorite of ours over the years. It's time to drop back in...  
Contact: Van, [busavan@flmsta.org](mailto:busavan@flmsta.org), or ☎561-386-2594

## [Future Florida Rides](#)

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) for possible updates.

## [MSTA Florida Central Lunch Ride](#)

When: Sat., **January 12<sup>th</sup>**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
Where: [Old Spanish Sugar Mill Grill and Griddle House](#), 601 Ponce De Leon Blvd, De Leon Springs, FL 32130 ☎386-985-5644 ([map](#)) [*Note: Ponce De Leon Blvd runs NW off of US 17 at the post office*]  
Description: The old Spanish Sugar Mill is located inside De Leon Springs State Park. There's a \$2/person park fee for motorcyclists paid at the entrance. The restaurant is adjacent the springs which powered the mill back in the day. Inside, each table contains a griddle on which you cook your own pancakes (if that's your pleasure). One batter - a mixture of 5 stone-ground flours - and another of unbleached flour are provided in pitchers. Blueberries, bananas, chocolate chips and other toppings can be ordered as well as sausage, bacon, ham, eggs and homemade breads. Other foods available include salads and sandwiches. Prices are very moderate. After lunch, explore the park on foot and walk off some calories. Not having been there in years, I am very excited to go back. [OldSpanishSugarMill.com](http://OldSpanishSugarMill.com)  
Contact: Tom Blake, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎321-723-2857

## [MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride](#)

When: Sat., **January 19<sup>th</sup>**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
Where: [Camellia Street Grill](#), 202 Camellia St W, Everglades City, FL 34139 ☎239-695-2003 ([map](#))  
Description: We had a blast here last year! They were grateful to have visitors after recovering from Irma's wrath... Good eats in a funky locale. Inside/outside, on the water!! If you didn't join us for the National Park Boat Tour last time out, you can make amends now! Check out the website, and make your own reservations. Last visit, we were able to commit to the 2:00 tour. The dock is 5+ minutes from the restaurant. Check out their website... [EvergladesNationalParkBoatToursGulfCoast.com](http://EvergladesNationalParkBoatToursGulfCoast.com)  
Contact: Van, [busavan@flmsta.org](mailto:busavan@flmsta.org), or ☎561-386-2594

## Regional Events

### Statewide New Year's Day Lunch Ride

When: Tues., **January 1, 2019**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: [Peck's Old Port Cove](#), 139 N. Ozello Trail, Crystal River, FL 34429 ☎352-795-2806 ([map](#))

Description: FL MSTA is re-introducing the **New Year's Day Lunch Ride** for 2019. This used to be a very popular event originated and run for about a decade by past state co-director and high mileage rider Bill Royal. So, for 2019, start your new year out Royally with a ride to one of Florida's best gulf coast seafood restaurants at the end of one of Florida's twistiest roads. New year, new miles.

Peck's is located out in the gulf's marshes between Crystal River and Homosassa and is old Florida charm at its best. Nine miles of twisty [Ozello Trail](#) takes you out there. Everybody raves about Peck's seafood. The property is clean and comfortable and the whole staff at Peck's is extremely accommodating.

Long distance riders may want to ride in on December 31<sup>st</sup> - New Year's Eve (or earlier). The [Quality Inn](#) at 3434 SW College Rd, Ocala, FL 34474 is suggested. This property has comfortable rooms and reasonable rates. More importantly, good restaurants and watering holes are just a short walk away. And in the morning, it's only about an hour's ride through mostly rural Florida to Peck's. Phone the hotel direct at ☎352-854-3200. Verify cancellation policy and book early. Rooms won't last.

Contact: Tom Blake, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎321-723-2857

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

The Florida MSTA chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos: [click here](#).

We welcome articles and comments from our members for publication. Contact the editor at: [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org).

The MSTA National [website](#) has extensive event information:

🏍️ To join the MSTA or renew your membership: [click here](#).

🏍️ For the Events in 2018: [click here](#).

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National MSTA [RideMSTA.com](#)

Florida MSTA [FLMSTA.org](#)

#### More Contact Information

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

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# Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

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

## CLASSIFIED ADS

### 2005 Honda ST1300 Pan European

Excellent condition. Less than 9,500 miles.

- 🏍️ Honda tour pack
- 🏍️ Michelin tires
- 🏍️ Honda handlebar risers
- 🏍️ Motorcycle Larry integral highway pegs
- 🏍️ Throttlemeister
- 🏍️ KisanTech SignalMinder
- 🏍️ Lithium ion battery
- 🏍️ SpeedoDRD speedometer corrector
- 🏍️ Factory service manual
- 🏍️ Heli Bar
- 🏍️ Garmin Nuvi 550 GPS and RAM mount

This is a comfortable, great handling, reliable sport tourer that is well appointed and in superb condition.

**\$6,995.00**

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