



FLMSTA Newsletter | Apr 2026

April 2026 | Volume 20 | Issue 4

Welcome to the **Florida Gator Tale Newsletter** from the Florida Chapter of the MSTA! We've updated the newsletter to make it easy to read on your phone or tablet. However, you can still download a .pdf of this newsletter and archived newsletters from the FLMSTA website [here](#). The **Florida Gator Tale** includes all the news about rides, feature articles, Florida state reports and safety information to keep you current with the Florida MSTA.



Rides

Florida Rides This Month

IMPORTANT NOTE: Always remember to check the rides 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. Please check the [rides calendar](#) for possible updates.

East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, April 4, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Drifters Riverfront Bar & Grill**, 55716 Front St. **Astor, FL**
(352) 759-2802 ([map](#))

Description: This is the old Blackwater Inn in Astor next to the St Johns River. They have a big menu - about anything you could want. Plenty of paved parking.

Contact: Tom (321) 794-6147

North Lunch Ride - New

When: **Saturday, April 11, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Swampy's Bar & Grille**, 19773 E. Pennsylvania Ave.,
Dunellon, FL (352) 283-8368 ([map](#))

Description: NEWLY MINTED NORTHERN AREA REP, Robert Frey, has set up a few lunch rides!!! Look for more later this year...
Join him at this new-to-us location. Right ON the Rainbow River! Lots of parking. Great menu and plenty of outdoor seating!

Contact: Robert, president@dixiedualsport.com

South Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, April 11, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Marsh Landing Restaurant**, 44 N. Broadway St.,
Fellsmere, FL (772) 571-8622 ([map](#))

Description: This location will not interfere with the North ride.
An old favorite worth another visit!!

Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com or (561) 386-2594

West Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, April 18, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Woody's River Roo Pub, Grill & Tiki Bar**
5717 18th St. E., **Ellenton, FL** (941) 722-2391 ([map](#))

Description: Bob S. will host the next few West Central events!!

BIG THANKS!!

Contact: Bob Shields, boju29@msn.com

MSTA North Georgia Classic

When: **Friday-Sunday, April 24-26**

Location: **Mountain Valley Inn**, 13 Royalty Lane, **Dillard, GA**
(706) 746-5373

Description: The North Georgia Classic is a beloved tradition for the MSTA, marking the start of the rally season. This year we return to the mountain town of Dillard in Rabun County. Three unforgettable days of breathtaking scenery, exploring winding roads or forest trails.

Contact: For information and registration: <https://www.ridemstaga.com/home>

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 [rides calendar](#) for possible updates.

West Central Brunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 2, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

Location: **Wooden Spoon Diner Plant City**
712 S. Collins St., **Plant City, FL** (813) 652-8192 ([map](#))

Description: Enjoy a BRUNCH ride to a scrumptious destination!!
Come on out for some great food and camaraderie!!

Contact: Bob Shields, boju29@msn.com

East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 9, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

Location: **Riverside Café**, 3341 Bridge Plaza Dr., **Vero Beach, FL**
(772) 234-5550 ([map](#))

Description: Good food selection. Riverside view from under the tall Sr 60 causeway bridge. Ample paved parking.

Contact: Tom (321) 794-6147

South Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, May 16, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

Location: **Lightsey's Seafood Restaurant & Fish Co.,**
1506 S. Parrott Ave., **Okeechobee, FL** (863) 763-4276 ([map](#))

Description: Yep, we're heading back to an old favorite in the middle of everything!! This will be the last South Lunch ride until October. Join us, won't you?!?

Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com or (561) 386-2594

MSTA West Virginia Canaan Valley Rally

When: **Thursday-Sunday, May 7-10**

Location: **Canaan Valley Resort, Davis, WV**

Description: Head for the Mountains! The mountains of West 'almost heaven' Virginia! Experience some of the best twisty roads to be found anywhere and some of the best adventure riding to be found in the eastern US. Come to Canaan Valley and share those experiences with hundreds of other sport touring and adventure riding enthusiasts and enjoy the amenities that the Canaan Valley Resort has to offer.

Contact: For information and registration: <https://ridemsta.com/wv-canaan/>

For additional Florida events and information, to see the Florida MSTAs website's Events page.

The Florida MSTAs chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos.

Feature Article



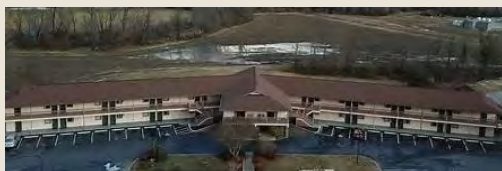
The North Georgia Classic

by Tom Blake

[Editor's Request: If you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share your experiences and some photos from your journey with other riders, please contact editor@flmsta.org to publish an article. Thanks!]

The North Georgia Classic At Mountain Valley Inn, Dillard, GA
Friday-Sunday, April 24 to 26, 2026

A really great way to start the new rally year and get a break from Florida's heat is to head north in late April for the MSTA's Just For Fun *North Georgia Classic* (NGC). The Blue Ridge Mountains have some of the best roads. It's still cool up there. You get to talk to and ride with friends you haven't seen for a while. Bottom line - it's a magical place and time of year to get caught up and do some really fun mountain riding.



The NGC has been centered at the Mountain Valley Inn in Dillard since 2023. Previously, it had been held in the nearby village of Helen. The Inn is showing its age, but rooms are clean, have very comfortable beds and strong, hot showers. Staff services the rooms and provides fresh towels daily.



Several restaurants are within easy walking distance. The Valley Café (7am – 8pm, Thurs - Mon) on the opposite side of US 441 is nice and has good food. The Cupboard Café (7am to 8pm, Wed - Sun), a couple doors north,

has excellent breakfasts and good comfort food. And there were a couple of Mexican restaurants just south of the Inn. The closest, La Cabana (11am – 10pm daily), is good. Haven't tried the other one.



I usually get there early, unload and go for a several-hour ride on moderately challenging roads. The point is to take it easy to start in

order to get reacclimated to mountain riding after so many months in flat old Florida with its 11 curves in 318 miles. Eventually I get that *mountain rhythm* going again. Then it's a matter of concentration and refining techniques. It's more about cornering precision than outright speed. And anticipation of and reacting to contingencies like loose gravel, potholes, suddenly appearing vehicles or animals, etcetera is a must.

Most riders begin arriving at the Inn Thursday afternoon. By evening, twenty-five or so are usually on hand and the greetings and socializing take place in the parking lot in front of the rooms – as is the case each evening. Small groups typically get together and walk to one of the restaurants for dinner.

While there are fun roads and worthy destinations in every direction, there are several that I've found especially enjoyable. Since I only get up there once a year, riding them again with a few wrinkles is still very enjoyable. As a testament to the diversity, I never see any of the other rally-goers while on the road. But they're out there somewhere - having a good time.

[Read more...](#)

Safety Talk



Intersections by Doug Westly

[IMPORTANT NOTICES: 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.

Editor's Note: We think Doug's safety tips merit repeating. This safety article is a repeat from the September 2017 issue of The Gator Tale.]

The very first rule of intersections is that drivers of other vehicles (the 4 wheels and greater kind) do not see you. Not that they can't see you. They just don't. Remember that at EVERY intersection you come to.

And just to be clear, intersections are everywhere. Not just the kind with lights and stop signs. When you think about it, every driveway that empties into a street is an intersection. Every alley that opens onto a street is an intersection. Intersections are everywhere.

As you approach an intersection, you have to scan in all directions. The threat can come from anywhere. You already know to look left and right. But what about in front of you? One of the most frequent two vehicle (or more) crashes, where a motorcycle is one of the vehicles, is in intersections, where the other vehicle turns left in front of the bike. You also have to look BEHIND you. You may be slowing down for an intersection, anticipating traffic or a red light, but is the driver of the car behind you paying attention?

So what do you do when a dangerous situation starts to unfold at that intersection you are approaching?

Rule No. 1: SLOW DOWN. Speed reduces reaction time and distance. Slowing down even a little may buy you the extra time you need.

Rule No. 2: Be ready for the unexpected. That car in opposing center lane could unexpectedly turn left, across the turn lane, and into your path of travel.

Rule No. 3: The light will change when you least expect it. Be ready for it.

Rule No. 4: Drivers don't care about Rule No. 3. They will run the red light. Be ready for it.

Now for some practical tips...

- Always look at the tires of cars stopped in the opposing lanes of travel. Are they turned in your direction? Are they starting to roll?
- Check the drivers. Are they paying attention? Are they distracted?
- Expect the road surface in intersections to be slippery. Cars and trucks stop for lights and stop signs. Oil drips. Grease drips. Antifreeze leaks. It all ends up under your tires.

Here is one of my favorite techniques for intersections, specifically when there is a car in the opposite lane, waiting to turn left, potentially across my path of travel.

Whenever possible and safe, I will adjust my path of travel very slightly, and aim my bike almost directly at the opposing vehicle as I approach the intersection. This puts my headlight right in their eyes. It also gives me more control over my path of travel if they do start to turn and enter my path. Instead of being committed to straight through the intersection or swerving possibly into them, by adjusting my trajectory slightly and for all practical purposes aiming at the opposing car, I can then react by swerving either in front of or behind the other vehicle.

The bottom line is that every rider needs to focus on those areas and locations where threat can impact their ride.

Intersections where vehicle paths transect are some of the most potentially threatening environments for motorcyclists.

Every rider should develop threat awareness techniques that allow them to scan, identify and react to possible danger.

Ride safe! – Doug Westly

Florida News



Florida News

Spring is coming?... here?... make your plans now!!

Our Feature Article is a great introduction to the start to the 2026 MSTA regional events.

Please check our Rides Calendar on our website for the destination closest to us! There are LOTS of ways to get out of town and ride some hills and dales!!

Tom hosted the March 5th Daytona Lunch at the RiverGrille on the Tomoka, and the March 21st East Central lunch at Cowpoke's. Good times!! See his report below!

Eve hosted the March 14th West Central Lunch at the Sunrise Eatery. Only two riders joined her, despite the weather only being a little iffy. Good times for the small gathering nonetheless!! She still has MSTA hats for sale, so reach out to her if you've missed your opportunity to buy one in person. (6saturdaysretired@gmail.com) She will be handing off her hosting duties to Bob S. for the next few months. **A HUGE THANKS FOR HER EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE CLUB!!** Be sure to keep up with ALL of the ride-to-eats on our website!!

I took Tom up on his offer to overnight at his abode which sweetened the opportunity to attend my first Daytona Lunch Ride!! My prior employment schedule over the last several decades didn't allow such a luxury!! The 3.5 hour slog up I-95 was uneventful, and rewarded me with a wonderful lunch and gathering of riders. I even won the 50/50 raffle, donating \$20 back to the Club! Afterwards, Tom led a ride along the Ormond

Scenic Loop & Trail and eventually to the Track. Tom, Larry and I wandered the exhibits, stopping at several. Though the "footprint" covered by the manufacturers and vendors has shrunk from 20 years ago, the latest tech and retail stall design still allowed for a good show! **A BIG THANKS** to Tom for his guidance and hospitality!!!



Two days later, I led the Southies to the Gator Shack Restaurant at the Babcock Ranch. It has been a few years since our last visit, and they continue to shine with good service and plenty of delicious food!! Please revisit my December 2021 Florida Gator Tale Feature Article for

an in-depth report on this amazing location!! We had enough attendees to run our 50/50 raffle, and Tom B. pocketed his lunch money! We had \$62 from the Daytona lunch, \$17 from the South lunch, and \$10 from the East lunch. Our new total is \$1,216.00. **A BIG THANKS** to all who participate!!

The weather couldn't have been more enticing for a ride! Four riders joined me at the Wawa, and rode the simple roads Florida is "famous" for. We did have a highlight on the ride there, and another on a different route back home. CR-78(River Road) from SR-29 to SR-31 offered an *unimpeded* route, allowing for some good runs through the sweepers! Like it was 2006...We thanked the Corner-Karma angels...On the way home, we swung north and rode the back roads through Venus back to SR-70. Just a wonderful spring afternoon chasing familiar sweepers!

What's Next??

We have **four** rides planned for April!!

Tom will host the East Central Lunch on April 4th to Drifters Riverfront Bar & Grill in Astor.

Northern Area Rep, Robert Frey, will host his first North Lunch Ride at Swampy's Bar & Grille in Dunnellon on April 11th. We purposely spread out the North and South rides to avoid any conflicts for the members. Van will host the South Lunch at Marsh Landing in Fellsmere on April 11th.

Bob S. will host the West Central Lunch at Woody's River Roo Pub in Ellenton on April 18th.

We have inserted an email response "button" to our announcements to assist our coordinators with the reservation headcount. Click on the green "button", then hit the send arrow. The pre-loaded email will be on its way!! Easy peasey!!



Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

Pat Mogavero is our MSTA Membership Director! We have adapted to the new presentation of monthly data over these last few months. So far, Pat has introduced several improvements with a few more tweaks to come. **Big Thanks!!** patrickmogavero@gmail.com Contact him directly with any membership issues.

FLMSTA welcomed two new members in March - Ted Moyer of Santa Rosa Beach and Bill Smith of Jacksonville. Welcome!

The following MSTA memberships have or will be expiring soon:

- **Brian Brannon**
- **Michael Ewanus**
- **Prior Powers**
- **Charles Quesenberry**
- **Bob Stanley**

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the **NEW MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM** at <https://ridemsta.com/membership-account/membership-levels/> or simply visit the **MSTA Website** at www.ridemsta.com and **LOG IN** and then click on **MEMBERSHIP**.

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please direct them to the **MSTA Website** at www.ridemsta.com. For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle touring package 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.

Random Ramblings!!

Hope you're out riding during this dry season... you know what's coming!!

Smile every morning that you see yourself looking back in the mirror!!

Hoping you're living the life you love, and loving the life you live...

When you can...

Join one of our monthly rides!!

***And** invite a friend to ride along!!*

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

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Director

March 2026 East Central News

Tom Blake



Bike Week: Lunch was held again at *RiverGrille on the Tomoka* in Ormond Beach. Big oak trees and other native vegetation surround the property and partially hides the restaurant. We actually

rode past it and had to double back. They put us in the large dining room overlooking a pristine Tomoka River which is immediately north of the restaurant. Outside, our bikes cooled their pipes in the shade of trees lining the parking lot. I asked everyone what they thought of the restaurant choice. The response was essentially – perfect! Clean, good food, good service, good location, good scenery, good parking. And great camaraderie



Van was our in-state LD rider with 220 miles and all accomplished that morning. Ooph. Mother Nature was good to us, at least in the eastern half of the peninsula. I believe there were some gulf-coasters who were

planning to attend but didn't. The 50/50 raised \$65 and Van had the winning ticket. Ka-ching... \$32 to the chapter's coffers.

Looking back from 2014 to 2025, attendance at the lunch has varied from 14 to 29 and averaged 21 excluding 1 very low outlier due to storms and hail. This year the count was 17 including four out of state riders – Ed B from central GA, Larry K and Quint M from NE Ohio and Craig S from SE TX. Several

members who used to come down every year aren't showing up anymore.

Regarding bike week in general, vendor shows around the area used to be major attractions lining the streets and taking over shopping center parking lots. Nowadays, goods are readily available online and many vendors no longer see the benefit. Also, riders are aging or are burnt out. Attendance is way down. But... if you're into highly customized Harleys with LOUD pipes and even LOUDER speakers... well, this is still the place to be seen and heard though even the Harley crowd is shrinking.

A few of us rode part of the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail after lunch and then stopped by the vendor show at the speedway (one of the few left). We could hear bikes running on the track. Surprisingly, this vendor show seems to have grown a bit this year – primarily with new bike brands, ones I was unfamiliar with. We walked the whole show. Larry S got the very last life out of his boots as both soles gave it up and fell off! I'm not lying. RevZilla was the only vendor we found with boots but nothing they had in stock fit. We saddled up and headed south



Cowpokes Watering Hole: It was a nice gathering of central gulf and east coast riders. Plus a surprise visit by "Moose" Parish, the longtime

Indiana state director. There were thirteen in all. This time we only filled 2 tables. The 50/50 raised just \$20 – several zero, one, two or three-ticket purchases. Jim G got the \$10 prize. We had a lot of fun yacking away about this and that. And I believe everyone was pleased with their food selection. It was perfect weather to be in the large Tiki bar. But we finally decided to pack it in and head home. The 12-hour Sebring sports car race was under way at 10am and some of our group decided to head over there.



East Central riders (above) and West Central riders and Moose (below)

Up Next: *Drifters Riverside Grill* in Astor will be on the 4th (the day before Easter) Another chance for the northern half of the state to gather (although everyone's invited).

Safe Journeys, Tom

Florida MSTA Apparel



Florida MSTA Apparel

As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to 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!!

Classified Ads

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to editor@flmsta.org. Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!

Contact Information

These MSTA websites have extensive event information:

National MSTA: RideMSTA.com

SE Regional MSTA: MSTA-SE.com

Florida MSTA: FLMSTA.org

We're also on **Facebook:** facebook.com/FLMSTA/

More contact information:

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