



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

Our Trip to FALL on TWO Wheels of Suches 2022

By Tom Blake

The inaugural **Fall on Two Wheels of Suches** rally (a Georgia MSTa JFF event) took place from October 14th to 16th – Friday to Sunday. Two Wheels of Suches (TWOS),

<https://twowheelsofsuches.com/>, is a motorcycle-only campground in the small, north Georgia community of Suches where GA 180 (Wolf Pen Gap Road) meets GA 60. Many will remember the campground by its

original name - Two Wheels Only (TWO).



TWOS lodge and parking area – camping, cabins and bathhouse are behind and left of the lodge as shown

It's a nice place. They have easily accessed tent camping sites and eight rustic cabins with nearby charcoal grills, fire rings, picnic tables and a new bath house. And the main lodge building has 4 bedrooms and a common area with bathrooms upstairs. Downstairs includes the kitchen and a large dining room which is open Fridays for supper, Saturdays for all three meals and Sundays for breakfast and lunch only. Chairs and rockers on the covered porch and seating on the deck are always inviting. And two restrooms on the side are accessible from the porch even when the restaurant is closed.

Rose wanted to go and spend a couple of weeks at a cabin in the mountains. That's good because I had no interest in roughing it. We found one that looked promising in the Blairsville, Georgia area (about a half hour from Suches) and booked it for October 2nd to 16th.

It took most of October 2nd to drive up (I trailered the KTM). As soon as I got into Georgia, the yawning started. Closing in on Athens, I caught myself repeatedly nodding off, so took a nap in a gas station parking lot. After that, I was fine the rest of the way up. Upon reflection, maybe I was more worn out from Hurricane Ian's aftermath than I thought. Rose drove up separately and arrived at our cabin shortly after me.

Most of the time, we relaxed at the cabin or visited historic downtown Dahlonega, Vogel State Park, the Sorghum Festival in Blairsville, old friends up in Murphy, North Carolina, like that. One of Rose's brothers and his wife drove down from the Knoxville, Tennessee area for a visit the first Saturday. I only rode the KTM on four of the thirteen non-travel days. Three of those were all-day rides.

Hugh, one of our central Florida MSTa riders, was up there so we arranged to do a nice long ride the first Tuesday. He invited one of his local riding buds to go along and the three of us spent half the day riding over to the Lake Toxaway, North Carolina area for lunch at a Mexican restaurant right next to the lake's huge spillway.

For reference, it's about 23 miles east of Highlands on US 64, but that's not how we got there. Well, maybe. I'm not sure. I was just following Hugh. The ride back was just as much fun. A very satisfying day. Thanks, Hugh. And the weather, though chilly to start, could not have been nicer.

A couple days later, I set out on my own. The first stop was at the River's End Restaurant at the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) <https://noc.com/restaurants/rivers-end-restaurant/>. It's about 34 miles northeast of Murphy, North Carolina on US 74 and overlooks the Nantahala River – a paddle sports paradise. A bowl of chili and a big mug of hot chocolate crowned high with whipped cream really hit the spot after the morning's cool ride up. The peacefulness and beauty of the setting draws me back again and again.



Rivers End Restaurant along the Nantahala River



Aerial view of the Cherohala Skyway

Then it was on to Robbinsville and the Cherohala Skyway over to Tellico Plains, Tennessee where I pulled off for a fill-up and short break (<https://cherohala.com/>). Everyone's heard of the Skyway, and it is incredible. It is a *must ride* adventure whenever you get the chance. Weekdays are my preference. Kudos to whoever dreamt this project up and moved it to fruition.

From Tellico Plains, I took TN 68 south, a very fun ride in its own right, and turned at the sign that said Joe Brown Highway. This road goes about 30 miles southeast to Murphy. But after just a short stretch of pavement, the next 8 miles turned to gravel over the mountains. Up, down, left, right, switchbacks! It was a first and second gear slog the whole gravelly way. I wondered if it would ever end. Then, finally, it was just paved *knarlyness* another 20 miles down to Murphy. I really meant to go a different way, finishing with the paved section of Joe Brown but my curiosity got the best of me when I saw the sign back on 68. Well, it was quite an adventure. I managed to stay upright but will not attempt the gravel part ever again.

And then on the last Friday and Saturday, I met up with rally-goers at TWOS about 9:30 a.m. On Friday morning, only about eight or ten riders were present. We took a nice ride up GA 60 to Morganton (one of my favorite roads). And then a back road got us over to Blairsville for lunch at **Jim's Smokin' Que** about 5 miles south of town <https://jimssmokinque.com/>. You get a lot of really good food for the money there. We sat on the porch and told a bunch of lies while the calories were flooding in. Since that's all the organized riding they were planning to do, I just rode back to the cabin after lunch, saving myself two half-hour runs over to Suches and back across Wolf Pen Gap Road.



Jim's Smokin' Que, 5 miles south of Blairsville on US 19/129

Quite a few riders were on hand Saturday. We split into two groups. One was designated the "scenic" ride and was led by Georgia State Director Eric Larson. It attracted the majority of riders. I was going to go with them but decided it would just be too many bikes

So, I went with the small "spirited" group. It was led by some dude who rides those roads often and **really fast**. The next four guys in line were staying up with him. I was #6 in line and was not quite keeping up on some of the more challenging sections. Had I been sure there wouldn't be any animals or loose stones, etc. in curves, I think I could have hung with them. The guy behind me was having a much harder time than me. By the time we got to the end of War Woman Road east of Clayton, Georgia, the last guy was nowhere in sight.

A couple of us backtracked but we finally decided he had just dropped out. Then the fellow with me disappeared! I again backtracked but decided he too went off on his own. *Doesn't anybody communicate?* Fortunately, I knew the lunch location and pulled into the parking lot while the leader and one other were taking off their helmets and jackets. The final three showed up about thirty minutes later. Don't know what that was all about. BTW, this was the very same Mexican restaurant that Hugh and I ate at the previous week. Afterward, the leader suggested some twisty roads to go back on – ones I'd never been on before. They headed over the mountains north and west of Cashiers and Highlands, North Carolina. I programmed them into my GPS and enjoyed my own version of a very spirited ride back to the cabin.

We loaded the KTM that evening and packed up. Sunday was our travel day back to Florida. As always, we were happy to fall asleep in familiar surroundings Sunday night.

Safe journeys,

Tom

Safety Talk

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.

How much HP do you really need?

By Doug Westly



As we gain experience with our riding, we'd like to think that riders also gain perspective. In reality, sometimes that happens, other times it seems to miss the target. Probably, this happens more so than with any other motorcycling issues - the desire for HORSEPOWER.

There seems to be an unspoken creed in motorcycling that more hp is always better. "I've got more horses than you." "It takes hp to get out of a situation." "When in doubt, throttle out." Over 50 years of riding, and I've heard all of those, many times. I'm sure you have as well. And, for a long time I was as guilty as the next rider in always wanting more horses.

Of course, most manufacturers will tell you it matters. That's how they sell their product. It becomes particularly important as the sales move towards the sporting end of the motorcycling spectrum.

Sitting back and thinking about it, a rider can't really gain a perspective about what high horsepower really means on the public streets (other than breaking the law...by a lot). Having too little horsepower is another thing altogether. For instance, most of us know what it's like not having enough mechanical guts to make a safe pass at highway speeds. We all get that. But, if one sport touring bike makes 140 hp and another makes 170 hp, does it really matter? How much is enough? And...does too much actually become a potential liability?

In track riding, and even more in actual racing, either on or off-road, more horsepower is usually a good thing. The only issue here is controllability. Can you put enough of that horsepower to the ground in a controlled manner, to result in desired performance? It's on the track that you really get to appreciate what horsepower and speed really mean on two wheels.

But on the street, how much of that horsepower is actually USABLE in your riding? Does it matter if a sport touring bike's top speed is 125 mph or 160 mph? Does it really matter if your v-twin cruiser can go from 0-60 in 4.2 seconds or 3.6 seconds?

Well, certainly if your ego is talking, then yes, it's important. For young sport bike riders whose only goal is to prove how fast they are, usually on the street, in a straight line and in violation of lots of traffic laws, not to mention continually damaging our sport's reputation among the general driving public, yes, it's important.

On the other hand, what I've learned over the years is that it is not always about horsepower. Particularly over the past 10 years as I've coached track riding, I've often been at a pure horsepower disadvantage when coaching new students, intermediate and expert riders. What makes up for a disadvantage in horsepower? Simply put, knowledge and skill. Knowing HOW to use your bike tends to be a lot more important than how many horses are under you at any given moment. Unless you are actually racing and have a long straightaway where sheer horsepower and speed are the only main factors, then minor differences in horsepower are actually pretty irrelevant. I've run down more than a few students and competitors on the racetrack who have a 10-20 horsepower advantage, simply due to experience, training and an understanding of riding techniques as applied to a particular track. Horsepower is not the cure-all a rider may think.

So how do we apply this assessment of horsepower needs to riding on public streets? The first question you need to ask yourself is easy. How much horsepower do I need versus how much does my ego want? That's a personal decision. Once you figure out that quandary, the next questions are simply technical.

- What kind of horsepower requirements match my riding style and needs?
- Do I need more horsepower, or more torque (Torque is for another discussion altogether, but you get where we're going with this...)?

While we're at it, here's one more thought. Once you get hold of that uber-horsepower bike, can you keep it and yourself in check? Or is the temptation of all that power at your right wrist simply too much for your ego to ignore? It's a simple mantra to remember: "Stupid Hurts".

In reality, just because that shiny new adventure bike may have 170 horsepower, it doesn't mean you'll ever get to use it. In fact, the newest sport and ADV bikes (and even standards and cruisers) have so much excess hp that now a lot of them not only have traction control (actually a good thing), but even wheelie and launch control. Really? Launch control on a bike you'll never put on the track? And, even then you don't need it unless you're actually racing.

The bottom line is that manufacturers keep upping horsepower as a sales tool and to generate more profit. They know customers, particularly in the American market, can't resist higher numbers. If I've got more horsepower (and my bike is more expensive) than you, I must be better, right? The reality is that no rider needs 170 horsepower for the street. You need enough horsepower to match your riding needs and stay safe...and undoubtedly have some CONTROLLED fun when the opportunity presents itself.

Any more than that, and it's your ego talking, not your skill set...

Ride safe! – Doug Westly



South Director's Report

Tis the season!! Here come the Snowbirds and the Canadians...

Unlike the last two winters, the Canadians have an open border again, and I've counted plenty of Ontario- and Quebec-plated large RVs and even larger 5th wheel trailers heading south on I-95. And the car haulers are full of out-of-state cars...Riders beware of the returnees!!

Fortunately, our final lunch destinations for November weathered Ian and Nicole and were open for biz!! Carl's last ride report to Goodrich Seafood is below. He has retired his Central Co-Directorship as life has uprooted him to friendlier Floridian environs.

No need to panic! We have two new volunteers to assume the roles of Area Reps. The EC have been in discussion about changing up the definition of State Directors/Co-Directors versus more regional friendly descriptors like Area Reps. We have decided to take a leading role in "beta testing" this concept. **Tom Blake** has stepped up to organize the **Eastside of the Central area**. And **Doug Westly** will assist with the **Westside**. Together, they will optimize the opportunities for our members, likely incorporating a larger geographical area than we have served previously. I will continue to keep the Southies entertained. The tentative 2023 Rides calendar is on the website. Destinations and the "TBDs" will be finalized over the next few months. And we are really hoping to establish 1-3 Area Reps way up north to energize our members from Pensacola to Jacksonville.



Lots of happy riders and good food on the patio at Dock 633 in Lake Placid

The week after the Central ride, the Southies headed to...Dock 633! Ian did run too close to Solomon's Castle, and left it damaged, with reopening to be determined. A brief scramble for another destination had us returning to an old favorite that we last visited several years ago. Dock 633 remodeled their back patio, and we put it to the test! 22 riders made their way to Lake Placid and put our one server to the test. And she nailed it!! The staff stepped up to help as they could, but she carried the day! And the food was even better than the service!! Lots of happy riders hung around until almost 1:30. They have earned a return visit for sure.

A personal thanks to James Siler for taking the reins of "ride leader" as I was under doctor's orders to chill after my abdominal hernia surgery. So, I caged it to Lake Placid. Six riders joined James at the meet-up for a spirited ride, leaving them all smiling and thankful for his efforts. Well done, James!!

As Lake Placid is centrally located for much of our membership, we had riders from Melbourne to Tampa to Palm Beach County join in the festivities! The crowd provided a significant fund for the 50/50 raffle, with \$40 going to winner Tom D. Adding the remaining \$40 to the \$12 from the Central ride, our new total stands at \$978. Always a BIG THANKS to all who participate in our raffle!! After settling up our yearly GoDaddy obligations at the end of December, I'll send an email detailing our remaining balance. You all help make our Chapter look good nationwide!

What's Next??

As we have for the previous few years, we have scheduled one **Holiday Lunch Ride for December**. Join us on **December 10th at The Twisted Prop Bar & Grille in Winter Haven**. This new-to-us destination has plenty of room and a good menu. We already have our reservation...

After the rush of the holidays, join us for the traditional **January 1 ride to Peck's Old Port Cove** at the end of Ozello Trail. Look for the ride announcement with Doug's intentions!

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...

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...

FLMSTA welcomes two new members: Randolph Freyer from Brooksville and Tim Lynch of Lakewood Ranch. Great to have you ride with us!

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Tom Batchelor	Frederick Blackall	Michael Brennan	Brad Coston	Robert Croot
Brian Dickerson	Diana Dickerson	Stephen Evans	Nir Frucht	Larry Gonzalez
Gary Gray	Paul Heydemann	Garth Jenkins	Michael Lombardo	Don Moe
Don Mroczenski	Gary Pastorella	Carolyn Pastorella	Bob Shields	Alan Spears
Dennis Villarose	Donna Villarose	Jeffrey Withrow	Ilse Zeigler	

These Florida memberships have recently renewed their membership in the MSTA:

Stephen Albert	Richard Alleman	Tom Blake	Dennis Mitchell
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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 membership committee at membership@ridemsta.com. Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew or PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden, 11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, and not to the address of any prior membership director.

If you only want to update your phone, email, bikes, or other details, you can do so quickly via PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate. **Please include enough unchanging information to assure the correct member is updated in the database.**

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our brand-new **Invitation-To-Ride Tri-folds!** 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.



A passing to report...



Phil Ridgdill

It is with a heavy heart that I share the passing of one of the good guys in our lives. Phillip Ridgdill passed away the week before Thanksgiving. Some of you may remember him as our Northern State Director back when Bill Royal was managing the Southern region. Some of you may remember him as the founder and torch bearer of the Daytona Bike Week luncheons. As a former road racer for Kawasaki back in the day, he had countless connections with the racing world, from AMA Superbike legends to Kenny Roberts and Kevin Schwantz. Some of you may remember his long weekend Just For Fun events. The eating was just as important as the riding!! Some of you may have ridden with him over his favorite roads in N. FL and N. GA and NC and TN... His beloved wife, Carmel, often joined Phil two-up on his favorite VFR or ST. To behold the two of them riding together was to marvel at his skill set and her confidence in Phil, developed over thousands of miles riding together both here and Europe... I am blessed to have ALL of those memories tucked away, ready for an instant mental replay at a moment's notice...

Godspeed my friend.

For a wonderful tribute to Phil, please visit his obituary at:

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/jacksonville-fl/phillip-ridgdill-11032163>.

Random Ramblings!!

We swing back to LUNCH rides for the next several months. For the end of this year, we pack them into the first two weeks to avoid conflicts of interest with the Holidays!

Well, we've coped with COVID for over 2.5 YEARS now, and likely you all have settled your score with the pandemic and your course of action. FYI, the latest Covalent boosters are available. As the variants continue to circulate around the globe, please stay vigilant and continue to be healthy.

We've had a terrific year sharing good grub and lots of great gab!! Our new personnel ought to make 2023 even more better...

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 Co-Director



Central Director's Report

November Central Ride – Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House, Oak Hill, FL

With Carl recovering from his accident, I'll share his last ride report with you all! First and foremost, his recovery is going well. He has a few hurdles ahead, but progress is being made. He hopes to be out of the hospital by December 4th. And, Ilse was able to return home by November 29th!!

The Central Ride had 12 riders feasting and telling tales at Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House on November 5th. Great weather, good times and a fond farewell to Carl's role as Central Director. His efforts were very much appreciated by myself and lots of Central ride attendees!! Be sure to continue to support the new caretakers of the Central Region! They have great plans for the coming year!!

Black Friday Ride – Marsh Landing, Fellsmere, FL – Tom Blake



A small group braved the elements and enjoyed friendly chatter on the Black Friday ride.

Our annual Black Friday ride was to Marsh Landing again this year. Traffic was light as expected. But Mother Nature was throwing curve balls – first, with dense fog and then, some very dark, ominous looking and potentially rain-producing clouds, and finally, mid-80's temps with noticeable humidity for everyone's ride home. The fog burnt off quickly, and the dark clouds dispersed while we were inside.

Nevertheless, a small group of us braved the elements and enjoyed a lot of friendly chatter as well as some typical Marsh Landing food – *i.e.*, good stuff. In addition to Eckert (Spyder), Alan (Buell) and Fermin (Goldwing) - we were joined by Larry and Anita from Dayton, Ohio, who are currently wintering in the Orlando area (they drove over), and prospective new member Mike from Sanford on his very pretty blue DCT Goldwing.

We are all looking forward to Van's ride to Winter Haven in early December including Mike, who I think was very favorably impressed with our group. The New Year's Day ride to Peck's Old Port Cove was also discussed with considerable enthusiasm.

As you may have read, I'm back. Many thanks to Carl Swofford who so effectively carried the Central torch. His situation changed (as has mine), and I've been dredged back up for a while. I've got a whole slate of rides already scoped out for next year (except for a couple of the brunches – suggestions anyone?). Several are to new destinations. All are in the east-central area. I hope they will all turn out to be up to your high standards and create positive buzz. I'm also happy that someone familiar with the west-central area will be organizing some rides over on that side of the state. That should be a very positive development for everyone in that area. I never felt like I was able to adequately meet the needs of our west-coast riders. So, now, I'm really excited for the new year to begin.

Finally, I hope all of you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. And, may I be one of the first to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas (new bike toys?) and a very rewarding New Year. Van, Doug and I will be doing our best to make it so.

Safe Journeys,

Tom

Florida Rides This Month

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 Statewide Holiday Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **December 10th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **The Twisted Prop Bar & Grille**, 615 7th SW, **Winter Haven, FL** ☎ (863) 293-1937 ([map](#))

Description: A central location to maximize the participators!! New-to-us destination!! Plenty of room, friendly menu, and they took our reservation in October!!

Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com, 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 any updates.

Just For Fun New Year's Lunch Ride

When: Sunday, **January 1st, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

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

Description: Let's keep the tradition going!! Just a great way to kick off the new year!! Reservations are made!

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

MSTA Florida East Central Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **January 14th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Charlie and Jake's Barbecue**, 490 E. Eau Gallie Blvd, **Indian Harbour Beach, FL** ☎ (321) 777-7675 ([map](#))

Description: New for us, C & J's has been around for many years and offers pretty good lunches and service in an inviting environment. They're on the north side of the Eau Gallie causeway between the Indian River and the ocean. There's lots of room inside including a private room and plenty of paved parking.

Contact: Tom, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎ (321) 794-6147

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **January 21st, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Gator Shack Restaurant at Babcock Ranch Eco Tours**, 8502 FL-31, **Punta Gorda, FL** ☎ (800) 500-5583 ([map](#))

Description: A return to Florida's true nature...Laid back lunch spot, surrounded by pre-1940's landscape!

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

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, **January 28th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Solomon's Castle**, 4533 Solomon Rd., **Ona, FL** ☎ (863) 494-6077 ([map](#))

Description: YEAH!! It is open for business again!! We begin the year with Doug's efforts to create more opportunities for the Central members!! There's a chance a few Southies may appear! We had to cancel the South Ride due to Ian's wrath.

Contact: Doug, flwingrdr@msn.com, or ☎ (813) 928-1663

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](#).

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!! Shopping finds online... We found some fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for

this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts>.



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/

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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!