



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

May 2021 - Volume 14 Issue 5

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Feature Article

A Fun Way Home After STAR

By Stephen Evans

[Ed. Note: Since STAR in West Virginia is coming up, we are featuring a ride from WV to VA for all to enjoy on the way home (and maybe try). Some links have been added.]

STAR in West Virginia is less than two months away, so I'd like to share some route information with my fellow members that they may or may not know about. Hopefully, this info may add to the enjoyment of their trip home south to the Carolinas, Georgia or Florida.



A place with motorcycle-only parking has gotta be good!

Last June, I was riding up in and around West Virginia with three friends for three days. We stayed in a B&B in [Marlinton, West Virginia](#) called [The Old Clark Inn](#), which is a very nice place and has some interesting history. It's also a place that motorcyclists know about, so we used it for three days as a base for operations. When we left for home one morning, a member of our group told us about Hwy 311 going south down through the [Washington and Jefferson National Forest](#) and into Virginia through a town called Paint

Bank that had an outstanding general store and attached was an outstanding restaurant called the Swinging Bridge Restaurant, which actually has a swinging bridge inside. He said it had good food and good service, and he was correct about everything - the road, the scenery, the general store and the restaurant.

When leaving the Canaan Valley Resort in West Virginia, head out to **Hwy 32 (R)** and go **south** down to Harman and catch **US Hwy 33 (R)** over to Elkins and from there catch **US 219 / US 250 South (L)**. When they split in Huttonsville, go right on **US 219** down through Valley Head - Marlinton to the outskirts of Lewisburg and catch **I-64 East at Exit 169**. Take **I-64 east** over to **Exit 183 / Hwy 311 South (14 miles)**.

OPTION - I'm going to stop here and give you an option - In Huttonsville, stay straight and take **US 250**, which is **also Hwy 92**, and at the split just past Bartow, go **right on Hwy 92** in a southern direction down through Green Bank - Minnehaha Springs - Neola and down to the outskirts of White Sulphur Springs and catch **US Hwy 60 East (L)**, which takes you onto **I-64 East at Exit 181**, and thus you have only 2 miles to **Hwy 311 on I-64**. Either US 219 or US 250 and Hwy 92 - the choice is yours.



Hwy 311 in West Virginia



Paint Bank General Store & Swinging Bridge Restaurant

So, you're now riding **south on Hwy 311** going through the [Washington and Jefferson National Forest](#) down through Virginia, West Virginia and then back into Virginia. You'll come to a small town called **Paint Bank, Virginia**, which is conveniently located in the middle of nowhere and has a whopping population of 138 humans. You WILL want to stop at the [Paint Bank General Store and Swinging Bridge Restaurant](#) (located inside the general store and has a swinging bridge) to stretch your legs and browse their wares, along with grabbing a bite to eat as their food is absolutely delicious.

Afterwards continue on **south on Hwy 311** down through New Castle to just outside of Roanoke where there you're going to have to get on **I-81 South at Exit 140** - (ugh). **I-81 south down to Exit 132 / US Hwy 460 West** (8 miles) and take **US 460** down to Shawsville and catch **Hwy 637 (L)**. Go **south on Hwy 637** down to **Hwy 653** (stay straight as 637 goes left). Take **Hwy 653 south** down to the little community of Simpsons and catch **Hwy 610 (L)**. Go **east on Hwy 610** over to **Hwy 642 (R)** and then it's a short distance down to **US 221 South (R)**. From here you can take **US 221** a short distance to the town of Floyd and catch **Hwy 8 (L)** down to the **Blue Ridge Parkway** or stay on **US 221**, as I'm sure all of you know all the options either road will give you, and they're all beautiful.



Riding Hwy 311 down to U.S. 221 and the Blue Ridge Pkwy



Meeting the daughter of someone I went to high school with in Ft. Lauderdale – It's truly a small world!

As a side story (as in WHAT are the chances of that happening) kind of thing and as Paul Harvey would say ... When the four of us arrived at the Paint Bank General Store and Swinging Bridge Restaurant that morning, while waiting for my food, I roamed around a bit and came across a huge map of the United States where people had stuck little pins in the cities they lived in. I noticed that no pin was stuck in Lake City, Florida, so I came across the manager and asked for a pin which she gladly gave me. She also accompanied me over to the map and when seeing where I was from, she stated that she was also from Florida. I asked what city and she replied Fort Lauderdale. WHAT??

ARE YOU KIDDING ME HERE?? Here we are in a town in the middle of nowhere with a population of 138!! I then told her that I was also from Fort Lauderdale as I grew up there (age 11 to 54) and have only been in Lake City for about 18 years. I asked her what high school she went to, and she replied Northeast High. **NO WAY!!** I said I also went to Northeast High School. It turns out that her dad and I were in the same (66) class and knew each other, and her mother was in the ('69) class and she herself was in the ('96) class. I say again - **WHAT** are the chances of this coming together in 2020 in a town like Paint Bank. It was unbelievable!! It is truly a small world!

—*Stephen Evans*

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. [Ed. Note: This article was previously published in the December 2014 edition of The Florida MSTA Gator Tale.]*

Touring Tip – Just a Ridin’ in the Rain *By Jim Parks*



Jim Parks in the rain on the Dragon

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

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

1. **Expect Rain:** Even if the sun is out, and there’s not a cloud in the sky before leaving home, expect the possibility of rain during any ride that lasts more than a couple of hours. That means riders should almost always pack rain gear. And, by the way, most textile riding gear that says it’s rain resistant, or even waterproof, usually isn’t in long, soaking rainfall. So, pack your rain gear!
2. **Trust Your Tires:** One of the biggest phobias of inexperienced riders, once pavement becomes wet, is that their tires will rapidly lose traction. The soft rubber composition of motorcycle tires (especially compared to car tires) means that most of them retain about 80% of their dry pavement traction. The presence of oil, antifreeze or any one of a number of other chemical substances on rain-slick roads, however, can significantly compromise traction. If wet pavement appears to have a reflective sheen, these chemicals may be present.
3. **Avoid Plastic Stripes on Pavement:** Pedestrian crossings and some other road markings are actually white plastic strips adhered to the pavement. These stripes become slippery when wet. The same is true for metal road surface coverings, tar snakes, wooden planks at railroad crossings and other similar road materials not made of asphalt or concrete. If these hazards cannot be avoided, then ride over them at a right angle, at moderate speed, with the bike perpendicular to the road surface.
4. **Treat Your Face Shield:** Recently I was caught in the rain without any treatment for my face shield. The rain accumulated in drops, diminishing my ability to see down the road in what, already, was a low light situation. I regularly use plastic polish to keep the surface of my face shield slippery, allowing water droplets to be largely blown away by the wind. I’ve used Rain-X on occasion, but it is designed for glass and doesn’t work well on a plastic face shield. It’s a good idea to treat your shield before beginning any ride.



Treat your face shield

If your shield fogs up, don’t open it completely because that will enable rain droplets to deposit on the inside that are hard to clear without stopping and removing the helmet to do so. Make sure all helmet vents are open and only crack the shield slightly to increase airflow and exhaust condensation.

5. **Inspect Rain Gear Integrity:** Over time rain gear can lose its ability to repel water. I learned this lesson once, the hard way, when my dated rain gear began leaking during a daylong ride in heavy rain. The combination of riding wet in the wind caused me to lose body heat, become chilled and then sick enough that I couldn't continue riding the next day. Nowadays I replace worn rain gear regularly and buy suits with heavy gauge material.
6. **Be Visible:** I will never understand why some OEMs make black rain gear, particularly the jacket. It's hard enough to see riders in rainy, low light conditions, without making them virtually invisible to human sight. If your rain gear top isn't especially colorful or visible, wear a high-viz vest on top of it. Because most other vehicles will have their lights turned on in the rain, reflectors also will improve other motorist's ability to see and avoid you.
7. **Slow Down:** Although a relatively small amount of traction is lost on clean wet pavement, it still makes sense to ride more carefully in the rain by avoiding: (1) excessive speed; (2) steep lean angles; (3) close proximity to other vehicles; and (4) aggressive stopping maneuvers.
8. **Don't Push Your Luck:** It's one thing to ride in rain, but quite another to ride into a thunderstorm or even a heavy downpour. Because your riding risk factors are already heightened in rainy conditions, know when to get off the road and take shelter. Remember, your rubber tires won't provide any protection in the event of a lightning strike and there's nothing between you and flying debris picked up by high winds. Common sense should tell you when it's time to "fold 'em."
9. **Practice:** Here's a radical idea: go riding in the rain, even when you don't have to! As is true with most other motorcycle riding skills, practice improves ability, confidence and enjoyment of the experience. The same is true for riding in the rain. Practice effective rain riding techniques close to home so they will be second nature when you need them on a road trip.
10. **Learn to Enjoy the Experience:** The rhythmic pitter-patter of raindrops, while ensconced in a warm dry cocoon, can be both enjoyable and relaxing. It only can be so, though, after mastering tips 1 through 9 above. I've heard of some motorcyclists, who enjoy rain riding so much, they actually look forward to rainy days in the saddle.

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

Florida News



South Director's Report

Ah, the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry...

Apologies to Robert Burns and John Steinbeck...Back in December, we laid out the first 5 months of riding events to best cover the state and to be of interest to the riders who hit the road, looking for adventure...(sorry!)

Fortunately, we hit mostly home runs. With the vaccine rollout, more riders have attended than last year. And, I've only heard about minor reactions to the shots...until my second shot kicked my butt just enough to keep me from making the South Lunch Ride to Laishley's Crab House. So, I relied on the kindness of a few "volunteers" to fill in for me.

Luckily, James answered the phone the night before the ride and then agreed to lead the group that would gather at the 7-11. An amendable number made the ride, with a few additions at the Love's Gas stop. James, Don and Buck made their way to the park for a waterside picnic, while Brian stayed at the restaurant. He met Rich and Doug, and they took the reserved table outside with the breeze and a view. Slightly behind the early-on-time group, Tom and Eckart ran into a little stonewalling by the Laishley staff. Seems they have a similar rule to Pops. The whole group must wait to be seated at once or the stragglers get placed where the staff says so... The paying customers prevailed, and our group enjoyed the venue and the grub!! Though the prices were noted...

The rides home were a bit hotter than one would expect for this time of year. I suspect that an above-average wind velocity helped the riders stay a little more comfortable...

You'll read about the less dramatic Central Lunch Ride from Carl below. We both apologize for the delayed ride announcement. Collectively, we simply lost track of the week and luckily came to our senses just in time to get the info out.

Here are some great photos by James of the BYO crowd at Ponce de Leon Park from the South ride to Punta Gorda...



The BYO crowd at Ponce de Leon Park overlooking Port Charlotte Harbor



Historic meeting - James getting to know the Ponce man himself

What's Next??

Ok, I intend to support and encourage everybody's decision on whether to ride, eat or be merry. I am leaving the BRUNCH/LUNCH rides as scheduled WITH CONDITIONS!! Though nearly all restrictions have been lifted for restaurants and bars, I will continue to contact the restaurants to listen to how they are operating. I will send out the usual email announcements after my research.

Of course, we will continue exercising the option for a "regular sit down" LUNCH by brown-bagging our own lunch refreshments and finding a welcoming place to "s p r e a d o u t" to eat and gab! Additionally, we have "regionalized" the email addresses of members in your area; say a 60-mile radius. This enables you up to reach out and set up "local rides" all over the state, any time you're motivated! Of course, the ultimate definition of "social distancing" is a solo ride!!

We have a split decision for you in May. The **Central ride will be a BRUNCH ride**, starting the summer season with a ride to **Mary's Kountry Kitchen in Tavares**. The South ride will still be a LUNCH ride. Our destination doesn't do brunch!

Join the **Central riders on May 15th** for some good roads, good food and fine gab! We will still offer a BYO destination for the time being. And the **Summerall Park** fits the bill.

The next **Saturday, May 22nd**, the **South riders head to Lightsey Fish Co. and Seafood in Okeechobee**. Since seafood hasn't become a breakfast mainstay, this will be the last lunch ride until October. For the BYO crowd, we plan to return to the **Battlefield Historic State Park**.

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...

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...

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Budd Breheim	Doug Christensen	Mike Engestrom	Robert Fischer	Pete Kauk
Brent Liming	Glenn Monroe	Becky DeShazo-Westly	Doug Westly	

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

Eve Blazsur	Roy Clark	Victor Salisbury	Larry Solomon
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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 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!!

With the newly released guidelines regarding the opportunities for vaccinated people to mingle safely, I do hope to see more riders roll up their sleeves asap.

The mental, economic and medical recoveries are simply all tied together with the behavior of our populace...

When you can...

Join one of our monthly rides!!

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

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Co-Director



Carl Swofford

Central Director's Report

April Central Ride – 3 Bananas, Crescent City

Saturday, April 10th dawned partly cloudy and pleasantly cool. Perfect weather for an MSTA lunch ride to the 3 Bananas located on beautiful Lake Crescent in Crescent City. Three of us met in Altamonte Springs for a leisurely 65-mile ride north on scenic US 17 to Crescent City. From Ponce de Leon Springs north, US 17 is two lanes with light to moderate traffic.



3 Bananas on Lake Crescent



Enjoying lunch in the shade on the porch

Eleven riders gathered at the 3 Bananas. We sat on the porch in the shade with a nice breeze. The food was good, the comradery great and the atmosphere relaxing. There was a lot of talk about STAR this year and next year.

For the return trip, our group chose a backroad that paralleled US 17 and the CSX railroad tracks taking us through the woods. We rejoined US 17 in Ponce de Leon Springs. It was a beautiful day for a ride.

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 Central Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, May 15th, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Location: **Mary's Kountry Kitchen**, 15945 County Rd 448, **Tavares, FL** ☎ (352) 343-6823 ([map](#))

Description: This is a **little country gem** south of Tavares that we've been to before. Unremarkable on the outside, they serve up generous portions of home-cooked meals inside, and the service cannot be friendlier. You don't want to miss it! Good roads to get you there. For the BYO crowd, head to **Summerall Park**, on the Dora Canal. Just 9 minutes away!!

Contact: Carl, carltr6@hotmail.com, or ☎ (386) 793-0030

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Saturday, May 22nd, 11:45 – 1:45 PM

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

Description: OK, OK... Yes, this is a LUNCH ride. This location doesn't do brunch. So, join the Southies for an extra LUNCH ride this year. We haven't been here for many years. Time to fix that!! OK location, legendary restaurant, great food, and you can use the circumference of Lake O for however long you wish to cruise...For the BYO crowd, we can return to the unexpected pleasure of the **Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park**. It's just 9 minutes away...

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

TriSTAR 2021 / MSTA

When: **Friday-Monday, May 28-31, 2021**

Where: **Alleghany Inn** 341 N Main Street, **Sparta, NC** ([map](#))

Description: Visit www.ridemsta.com Click EVENTS/2021.

Location: **Sparta, North Carolina**

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.

MSTA Florida Central Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, June 5th, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Location: **Grills Riverside Seafood Deck & Tiki Bar**, 6075 N. U.S. Hwy 1, **Melbourne, FL** 📞 (321) 242-8999 ([map](#))

Description: Back to the Indian River! Grills Riverside is a casual, laidback waterfront restaurant with outside tables and a view! Good food for breakfast and lunch while you watch the dolphins and boat traffic cruise the Indian River Lagoon. Sounds like a good time!

Contact: Carl, carltr6@hotmail.com, or 📞 (386) 793-0030

MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride

When: Saturday, June 26th, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Location: **Beef O'Brady's**, 21 S. Lee St., **LaBelle, FL** 📞 (863) 612-9818 ([map](#))

Description: I know, but every once in a while, we enjoy a “chain” alternative. This venue looks inviting, and the menu options cover many different appetites! Just 4 minutes away, you'll find **Barron Park** right on the Caloosahatchee River. Nice!

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

STAR 2021 / MSTA

When: **Sunday-Thursday, June 13-17, 2021**

Where: **Canaan Valley Resort and Conference Center** 230 Main Lodge Rd, **Davis, WV** 26260 ([map](#))

Description: Visit www.ridemsta.com Click EVENTS/2021.

Location: **Davis, West Virginia**

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>.

North Director Needed

If you would consider taking the position of North Director, please contact Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com.

We welcome articles and comments from our members for publication. Contact the editor at: editor@flmsta.org.

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

National MSTA RideMSTA.com

Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org

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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!