



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

Our Great TT Bucket List Quest

By David Sumner

I have long been in awe of the fabled racers of the Tourist Trophy (TT) races of the Isle Of Man (IOM). Thus, a visit has been at the top of my bucket list for many years. This series of races among motorized gladiators has been an annual event since 1907. In the opening year, the fastest lap of 46 mph was set on the 37.75-mile course by a Peugeot-powered Norton. Over the years this figure has steadily grown to over 135 mph (by Peter Hickman last year) – this done on surface roads, not a bona fide track! There are heaps of fine videos about this race series on YouTube. Check out a few.

My wife and I have enjoyed several self-guided trips in North America, Europe and New Zealand over the years, so I had high confidence that an economical IOM trip could easily be set up. I was soon humbled! Two years ago, I attempted to assemble the

components of a journey, which included not only trains and boats and planes, but cars, buses and motorcycles, too. I looked for advice online and spoke to a couple people who had been there. Even so, the task of coordinating the whole shebang seemed too daunting. I could imagine arriving at a transfer point, having missed a stitch somewhere, and ending up marooned. I postponed the attempt for one year. It seemed like I was building a clock from a bag of bits – at least for my limited imagination.

Granted, the simple course would have been to fly directly to the IOM and pay a consolidator, such as Duke Travel www.duketraavel.com, for a package deal. However, doing the coordination myself would save some bucks and add flexibility.

Many months passed before I set out again to build the trip. This time the pieces clicked! We decided to dip our toe into the TT experience by going to the Classic TT in August, rather than the main TT in May. As a bonus, the Manx Grand Prix, operated since 1923, is held at the same time on the same course. Our goal was to take in all that we possibly could of the TT experience, while avoiding the crazy mobs, high cost, congestion and transport issues that come with the May event. My order of bookings was as follows:

- 1 – Air travel to – where??
- 2 – Lodging on the IOM
- 3 – Ferry to and from the IOM
- 4 – Book a bike for a day to ride the course
- 5 – Book a car for three days to tour the island
- 6 – Race event tickets for grandstands, etc.
- 7 – Dining reservations at Creg-Ny-Baa



... then she left me for George – right in front of her sister!



John Lennon's car near the Cavern Club



Our girls beaming at the Cavern Club with the Beatles Week band lineup

Liverpool is a fun and interesting city – a great place to overcome jet lag before setting out for the Isle Of Man. Besides Beatles mania, there are many more serious sites, such as the Liverpool Cathedral, the second largest such in the world, after St. Peter’s in the Vatican. Also, the waterfront played a critical part in shipbuilding during WW2.

The next morning, we taxied to the docks to board the Isle Of Man Steam Packet, www.steam-packet.com. This cavernous ferry boat quickly devoured scores of motorcycles, cars and trucks for the three-hour crossing to Douglas. The ship offered comfortable seating, a snack bar including cappuccino and Guinness, casino machines and even a theatre room.



Loading onto the Steam Packet ferry

From the Douglas ferry terminal, we caught a city bus to our hotel. After check-in, we hurried off to the nearest pub for a bite and a pint of Okell's, the local brew. Lots of fans choose to pitch tents for the duration, but that choice is for the young. There is also "glamping", offered by a couple vendors, which is an improved experience, including raised platforms and good bedding in yurt-style tents. Still, crowds, noise and shared baths were not desirable to our brides. Instead, we found our way to the Best Western Hotel & Casino in Douglas on the Queens Promenade. Their amenities were equivalent to a Quality Inn in the U.S. The hotel could use a face lift, but it is ocean-front, comfortable, quiet and convenient to the Noble Park grandstands. Visit www.iomtt.com, www.isleofman.com and www.visitisleofman.com for some useful resources.

Soon we began the fun part of the trip. We moseyed up toward the Grandstands area and watched a bit of practice. The lovely boom of Norton Manx thumpers and other makes echoed off old stone walls and buildings. Lots of people were watching, but it was not really crowded; nor were we ever crowded out of great viewing anywhere during the trip. Our choice to make our maiden visit during the Classic TT rather than the May TT had been entirely the right decision! By the way, the Classic TT festivities have a shorter time frame than the May TT, so the promoters pack a lot into it, such as the Festival of Jurby across the island from Douglas and a performance by a troupe of comic daredevils known as the Purple Helmets.

As we wandered around Douglas and the rest of the isle, we saw a few unusual motorcycles, such as a 1928 Norton with sidecar, a steampunk HRD and a magnificent herd of German Horex 1200cc 165hp turbo V6 hooligan bikes. At around \$45k per copy, we had never seen a Horex before. Now before us were ten or so, scattered along the Promenade like flotsam!



These happy Nortoneers were seen putting about town!



Ancient HRD at Creg-Ny-Baa



Heavy metal with a heavy price! Horex's to your heart's desire, right here.

We budgeted four days to enjoy motorcycles, racing and the IOM culture. In that time, we were able to view the course from three prized vantage points, including the Grandstands, Ballaugh Bridge and Creg-Ny-Baa. At the Grandstands you can watch the starts and some speedy passes.

At Ballaugh Bridge you can watch the riders get airborne as they leap over. The preferred vantage point here is from The Raven pub, where you can get food and drink as you watch. Before practice on Friday, a local ambulance zipped by and caught more air than any of the racers. Clearly, he was just hotdogging it for the crowd, but yeah – it was pretty cool!



Anticipating the next race at The Raven pub by Ballaugh Bridge



Defying gravity at Ballaugh Bridge

Our third spot was the pub at Creg-Ny-Baa, which is situated at the apex of an “ell”. Riders approach on a ½-mile straight, round the corner, and depart on a one-mile straight. Wheee! The Creg was fairly packed, but we were served an excellent fish and chips dinner, with Okell’s, in record time.



The Creg-Ny-Baa corner. Note the spectators on the balcony.

We rented a motorcycle for a day from Mike Banks at www.motorcycleadventures.im. If you’re interested, be sure to book one early! Mike outfitted us splendidly, including helmets and jackets. We rode the track one leisurely lap in each direction. I had expected the road to be rough and cobbled, but it is well paved and smooth. It was a pleasure to travel, at least at the posted speed limit. At race pace it would be a different animal! Incidentally, when riding counter-clockwise, reverse of race direction, the view of the city of Ramsey as you slip down 2034-foot Snaefell mountain, is a special surprise. Racers don’t get a chance to see that glorious view.

On Saturday, we stationed ourselves at or near the Grandstands. We watched the legendary John McGuinness win yet again astride a Paton, a racing bike campaigned since 1958 by Giuseppe Pattoni, a former racer-cum-tuner for Mondial motorcycles. Vendors abound at the Grandstands, with tee shirts as cheap as £5. Plus, you can walk around the pits and chat up the riders, the crew and the camp followers.



One of a series of timed launches.



Liquid revenge on McGuinness!

Both racing and practice sessions are scheduled after workday hours on weekdays. Thus, there is plenty of time to explore the course and the rest of the island in between them. You can completely circumnavigate the island in about three hours, even touching the extreme points.

We rented a Hyundai Santa Fe from www.oceanford.com. In my opinion, a slimmer car would have been preferred as we bounced amongst typically narrow British hedgerows. Motoring anxiously on the wrong side, it's easy to scrape paint from a shiny new side panel, so a wise driver will spring for full insurance coverage.

As we travelled around, we came across a most unusual vehicle, a boat-tailed three-wheeler Miata! We never got to speak with the proud owner, but I snapped a couple photos.



Miata MX3 – but why?!

A few of the interesting non-racing sites include the Laxey Wheel, a huge steampunk water pump from the 1850's, the wonderful Murray's Motorcycle Museum, the Fairy Bridge, where racers go to ask the fairies for protection, the Chasms, Rushen Castle, the 3500-year-old Meayll (Mull) Stone Circle and photogenic Peel Castle. There are expansive overlooks aplenty around the island where you can stretch your legs and take in wonderful rugged scenery.



Peter Murray introduces us to sidecar racing at his wonderful museum. He's a Hoot!



A small part of Murray's array



This still life caught my eye at Murray's.



Racers visit the Fairy Bridge to request safety and good fortune



Laxey Wheel



Classic Triumphs at rest in the beautiful, quaint village of Cregneash



The Chasms, over the hill from Cregneash. Watch your step! The purple heather was stunning!



Meayll Circle on Mull Hill – what a view!



The town of Peel and its castle are worth some time!

A local in Peel suggested that we lunch at The Creek Inn, a pub across from the marina. It was a great choice. I got a meal of “queenies”, small clams with big flavor. We were seated next to the team of John McGuinness, who were in full pit regalia. I had to congratulate them on their win. I added that I knew that they were the true heroes of the victory. They concurred, of course!



A splendid Duc at the Peel Castle pier. Don't forget the legendary ice cream here at Davison's!



My phone GPS took us down a narrow road, which we had to share with disgruntled locals.

The Isle Of Man reminded us of Ireland – rolling pastures of grazing sheep, craggy coastline, changing sky. As are all of the British Isles, travel by motorcycle is the oyster's ice skates! As stated earlier, driving a six-foot-wide car down a squiggly, rock walled seven-foot road - shared with oncoming traffic – is taxing to one's nervous system. If you can get your hands on a bike, motorcycling is an improved way to travel. But now I'm preaching to the choir!

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.*

Due to his busy schedule with Honda, Doug Westly has decided to discontinue his safety columns in our Florida MST A Newsletter as well as in STARreview. We sincerely thank Doug for his many years of excellent articles. Until another rider steps forward to volunteer to prepare new safety-related articles, we will republish Doug's previous articles, with his permission.

After The Crash

[Ed. Note: This article was suggested by Becky DeShazo-Westly, who had a good friend involved in a single-vehicle, motorcycle crash. The article previously appeared in the December 2011 edition of The Florida MST A Grapevine.]

OK, so it has finally happened. One minute you were upright, having a great ride. The next moment, or at least the next one you can remember, you're lying on your back on the highway, looking up at the clouds. Your beloved bike is wadded up in the grass, having slid 50 yards farther down and off the road. Fortunately you were wearing ALL your gear (Remember: ATGATT!), so it's just bumps and bruises. What happens now?

We're not talking about the immediate post-crash activity. What happens after you're home, everything is taken care of, and you begin the process of post-crash introspection. What happened? Could it have been prevented? **Do I still want to ride?** It is this last question we want to explore for just a moment.

First off, no one can predict how they will react to motorcycling after a significant crash event. Some want to get back on the horse immediately. Others aren't sure. Still others may decide to give up the sport. If you are the one facing this question, the only right answer is what is right for you.



Photo: Don Moe

In the case of the crash which suggested this article, the female rider was out on her own, riding the back roads on a high performance Motard, when she went down for reasons we still can't determine. She is back on her bike now, but still tentative and working back to her previous riding level. And before we get into the whole female vs. male discussion, this particular rider's bona fides includes race school, track riding, etc. So let's put that one to rest immediately. Gender is not an issue, period. It could be anyone, including you.

The important point here is that NO ONE can or should tell you what to do after the crash. You must evaluate your own situation and decide what is right for your riding future. Maybe you want to park the bike for a while and work through your thoughts. Perhaps it's time to go back through a level of formal rider training, to help rebuild your confidence. For some, getting back on the horse is the answer. Or, maybe you decide that motorcycling is not in your future, at least at this point. No matter what you decide, it is your decision. Make sure of that.

Oh, and one more thing...for everyone. If it is not you lying on the road that day but someone you know, please don't presume to do more than just offer support for whatever decision your friend makes about their riding future. Our sport is all about friendship, camaraderie and mutual respect. Don't try to force a friend onto a path they may not want to journey. Encourage their thought process and be ready to support their decision about their future motorcycling efforts. That's what friends are for...

See our [MysteryHyperlink](#) for further information on this topic.

Florida News

South Director's Report

DORIAN...

We collectively dodged a big one... again. If you can, do something to help our neighbors to the east. Nobody has suffered what those islanders endured. It will take years for a full recovery.



Van VanSteelant

Thankfully, we were able to enjoy the last two brunch rides of the season. Scheduling the rides at the end of September worked for several reasons. See Tom's report below. We did thwart the luv bugs....☺

The South Brunch Ride returned to an old favorite. As usual, [Main Street America](#) in Lake Placid was ready and waiting for us! The Eastsiders met up with our Broward County contingent at the usual rendezvous point, the Marathon Station. After a little en route equipment "fix", we enjoyed the backroads through Venus and around Lake Placid. Yours truly added a slow speed practice maneuver for the group upon approach to the restaurant. You know, a U-turn... With perfect sunshine and comfortable temps, I was cut a little slack about the extended route.

As we arrived "on time", we found some of the riders half way through their brunch! I don't think there's another more efficient restaurant on our calendar!! As Lake Placid is centrally located, we enjoyed the company of riders from both coasts and right around the corner! Don Mroczenski easily took long distance honors. 185 miles one way! I suspect he had similar mileage for his ride home.

We also had another successful raffle. Doug Farnham rode over with Central members from the Melbourne area and took home \$25! Now that the two donation checks have been sent to the [Road Warrior Foundation](#) and the [Motorcycle Relief Project](#), our new total is \$408.00. I want to thank all of you who continue to contribute to our fund! You can all be proud of the donations our Chapter has sent out this year.

I did make it to the Central Brunch Ride this weekend. An easy blast up I-95 and I'm taking pictures of the water front view of Grills Riverside. I had a great time sharing grub and gab with the usual Central membership!

After a short ride following Tom down a spit of land right in the middle of the Indian River Lagoon, I continued down to the [National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum](#). This



privately funded and managed tribute to our finest sits on the very land that this special ops force originally trained on during WWII. This was my second visit. They have revamped all of the displays and worked to cover the storied history of this voluntary special unit. I HIGHLY recommend a visit, regardless of your opinion about our



military. The men and women in our Navy, and especially the SEAL units, deserve our respect. All SEALs must go through the 24-week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL school and then a 28-week SEAL qualification training program. Only 1% of sailors who enter BUD/S school complete it -- and that's not the end of training. Training for a first deployment can take as much as *30 months*. If you want to see if you can measure up to some of their physical training regime, the museum has added an obstacle course similar to the BUD/S school... be sure to sign their waiver form first!

What's Next??

LUNCH RIDES ARE BACK!! LONGER RIDES IN THE FLORIDA SUNSHINE!! COME ON...

We have two destinations planned for back-to-back weekends. First up, on October 12th, the Central LUNCH Ride will be at the [Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#) in DeBary. Likely the best spot for lunch along the St. John's River! The next Saturday, October 19th, the South LUNCH Ride heads to a new-to-us location. The [Crazy Fish Bar and Grill](#) in Lake Wales comes highly recommended. Despite their land locked location, they bring in fresh fish daily from their licensed providers.

Remember, our LUNCH rides start with butts in chairs by 12:00PM... High NOON! Be sure to check our RIDES calendar for the remainder of 2019. We have a few twists in store, and you wouldn't want to miss out!

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...

We welcome one new Florida rider who joined the MSTA in September:

John Gilreath

These Florida memberships will expire soon:

Stephen Albert

Douglas Farnham

Rick Sapir

Harry Hal Smith

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. Renewing or joining can be quickly and securely done online at PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew or PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARevue or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden**, **5380 Old Bullard Rd, Suite 600-315, Tyler, TX 75703**, who replaces the retiring Beth Hemstreet, and not to the address of a 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 Invitation-To-Ride quad-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!

This summer, we have enjoyed the company of new members and a solid core of regulars. It has been a great mix. The diverse back rounds and life stories have made our conversations around the brunch tables informative as well as entertaining!

Thank you all for your continued support of our Chapter!! Please reach out to your riding friends and acquaintances and invite them to one of our upcoming rides. If you don't ask, they'll never know what they're missing...

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

ATGATT Van

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Director's Report - September 2019

Hoping to avoid the chokingly thick lovebug swarms like we experienced this past spring, I pushed our September brunch ride out to the 28th. It made quite a gap between Central rides. Though the lovebugs swarms never materialized, it wasn't quite as hot and sticky out as it was early in the month. Besides, we were bracing for Cat-5 Dorian during Labor Day week. So, everything worked out for the best.



Tom Blake

[Grills Riverside](#) north of Melbourne sits right alongside the Indian River (Lagoon) just above the Pineda Causeway (SR404) so offers exceptional views out across the water. Most importantly, we enjoyed comfortable seating, good food and great service in an almost private section of the main dining room.



Our group grew from a worrisome three at 9 a.m. up to a very pleasant ten a little after 9:30. Discussions were lively and ranged from newly purchased motorcycles to learning to ride dirt bikes to sky diving and parasailing to 75-foot America's Cup sailboats flying along on foils at up to 60 mph!... to fish in the restrooms (don't ask) and more. I was struck by the extraordinarily good-natured camaraderie throughout. It was truly a pleasurable experience.



Left, CW: Van, Tom, Diana, Brian, Dale's mom, Dale, Larry, Carl, Eckart and Win.

Heading home, I led Van and Win down, new to them, South Tropical Trail (SR3). It meanders past some very posh residences along the narrow southern tip of Merritt Island with the Indian River on one side and the Banana River on the other. We then crossed Mathers Bridge to the unnamed barrier island stretching 45 miles from Cape Canaveral to Sebastian Inlet. Thanks to overexertion last month, my right knee was really aching so I took the most direct way home from there leaving them to continue southward on A1A.

Hopefully, our weather will continue to improve as we return to **lunches** on October 12th. It'll be at the [Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#), 448 W Highbanks, DeBary. We were there last December and everyone was favorably impressed. Clean, large dining area, very good food and service, reasonable prices, paved parking and great St Johns River views. Of all the restaurants that we've sampled along the St John's, this one is the best, in my opinion. It's between Deland (SR 44) and Sanford (SR46) and just west of 17-92 and I-4 on the east side of the river. I hope you can join us. Sit down is at noon.

Safe Journeys,

Tom Blake

MSTA Florida State Co-Director

Central Florida October Lunch Ride

Sat., **October 12th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
[Swamp House Riverfront Grill](#), ([map](#))
488 W Highbanks Rd
DeBary, FL

Northeast Director Needed

If you would consider taking the position of Northeast Director, please contact Van, busavan@flmsta.org.

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!!

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., **October 12th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

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

Description: We were here last December and were very impressed. Of all the places we've been to along the St John's River, hands down, this is the best. Really good food. Excellent service. Plenty of room. Clean and airy with scenic views of the beautiful St Johns River. Paved parking. There are no downsides.

Contact: Tom Blake, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎321-723-2857

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sun., **October 19th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Where: [Crazy Fish Bar And Grill](#), 802 Henry St, Lake Wales, FL 33853 ☎863-676-6361 ([map](#))

Description: Another new-to-us destination, though highly recommended!! I know they are in Lake Wales, but all of their fish is fresh off the boat, through licensed providers. Funky ambiance and a great menu. How can we miss...

Contact: Van, 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., **November 9th**, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Where: [Gator Joe's Beach Bar & Grill](#), 12431 SE 135 Ave, Ocklawaha 33870 ☎352-288-3100 ([map](#))

Description: This has been one of our favorite destinations for years. Gator Joe's, for those who haven't been, is a unique and rustic place on the north shore of Lake Weir. There's covered seating out on the dock where you can really take in the great scenery. Some of Florida's best roads get you there. Good food and service, too.

Contact: Tom Blake, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎321-723-2857

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: Sun., **November 16th**, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Where: **OK Corral Gun Club**, 9449 48th St NE, Okeechobee, FL 34972 ☎863-357-2226 ([map](#))
Description: We can't stay away!! Brilliant service and assistance by the staff. Delicious buffet in a terrific setting. Bring your own weapon and fire a few (hundred!?) rounds! Or, rent a shotgun and clip a bunch of clays launched from 7 stations! Though we are planning on our usual noon arrival, the facility opens at 8:30AM. You are welcome to get a head start on the day. And you could make it a whole weekend adventure, utilizing their cabins and nightly bon fires!!
Contact: Van, busavan@flmsta.org, or ☎561-386-2594

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

- 🏍️ To join the MSTA or renew your membership: [click here](#).
- 🏍️ For the Events in 2019: [click here](#).

National MSTA RideMSTA.com

Florida MSTA FLMSTA.org

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

Mystery Hyperlink of the Month

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

CLASSIFIED ADS

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

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 to discuss publishing an article. I can offer assistance in preparing your article. Thanks!