



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Contact Information:

Florida State Director:

Van VanSteelant – busavanflmsta@gmail.com

East Central Florida Area Rep:

Tom Blake – tblake1@cfl.rr.com

West Central Florida Area Rep:

Doug Westly – flwingrdr@msn.com

Florida Gator Tale Editor:

Kim Longacre – editor@flmsta.org

Feature Article

Key West – A Rider’s Destination

By Doug Westly

[Editor’s Note: This article is reprinted from the February 2020 edition of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]

So, you haven’t ridden to [Key West](#) yet? What are you waiting for? One of the advantages of living in Florida is that you’ve got a premier motorcycle adventure destination at your southern doorstep. Approximately 164 miles from Miami and only 90 miles from Havana, Cuba, Key West welcomes motorcyclists



with open arms. Over 40 bridges link Key West to mainland Florida and riding them is one of the highlights of a ride to the Southernmost point in the continental United States. From the west central part of the Sunshine State, it is about an 8-hour ride.

Your journey really begins in Florida City, the last town on the Florida peninsula, en route to the land of Margaritas and green flashes at sunset. In Florida City you actually have two route choices taking you to [Key Largo](#), the most northern of the Florida Keys. You can follow the tourista lemmings, wandering down single file on [US Hwy 1](#), or you can take Card Sound Road to the left. OK, so you have to pay a buck to cross one toll bridge, but there’s MUCH less traffic, the scenery through the little fishing villages is cool, and you immediately feel like you’re out of the mainland insanity. Oh, and this is the home of Florida crocodiles (the real ones that can actually run more than 20 miles an hour on dry land), so watch for them in the brackish waters next to the road.



Seven-Mile Bridge

Good timing will put you on Card Sound Road sometime around lunch, so you can stop at [Alabama Jacks Restaurant and Bar](#). Don’t worry, you can’t miss it. Order the conch fritters (that’s pronounced “conk”, by the way) and blackened Mahi! After lunch, with your belly stuffed, you’ll continue onto Key Largo and eventually rejoin Hwy 1. You’ll suffer with the Key Largo and [Islamorada](#) traffic for a few miles, then eventually make your way to [Marathon](#) and the Middle Keys. Here the traffic thins out, the sea air cools your ride, and you can relax all the way to Key West. Don’t forget to stop at the little parking area just on the north side of [Seven-Mile Bridge](#), on the right side of the road, to get the obligatory bridge picture!

Okay, you've made it to Key West. Hmm, where do you stay? Good planning means reservations were made at any number of hotels, B&Bs or campgrounds on Key West or in the lower Keys. This is particularly important if you plan on going during any one of the festivals that occur all year long. Expect higher (much higher!) hotel prices if you go during any of the large events. If you are into the night life, the place to be in Key West is [Duval Street](#), so pick a B&B or hotel within walking distance. Confused? Just search "[Duval Crawl](#)" on the web and you'll soon understand.



There's much more to Key West than just hanging out at [Captain Tony's](#) or [Sloppy Joe's](#) (although it was good enough for Ernest Hemingway). There are museums, tours, fishing charters, scuba diving, snorkeling trips, sunset cruises, and the list goes on. Or, you can just go lay on the beach.

If you get bored in Key West, it is your own fault! I highly recommend taking either the [Fast Cat](#) or the seaplane charter out to [Fort Jefferson](#) in the [Dry Tortugas National Park](#). It is an amazing place and a fascinating piece of American history. The seaplane ride is particularly fun!



Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas



A couple of warnings are in order here. First off, Key West is a "lifestyle friendly" town. You will probably see evidence of it both during the day and evening hours. Everyone keeps to themselves and it is not intrusive, but it is there. Second, be aware that Key West is also a cruise ship destination, so Duval Street can get crowded when a ship is in port. Actually, when you take situation number two and intersect it with situation number one on Duval Street, it gets pretty comical.

This brings us to another point. One of the great experiences of Key West is the people watching. You will see literally everything on Duval Street, particularly if there is a festival underway, and it coincides with a cruise ship visit. Be non-judgmental, find a good people-watching spot (one of the many outdoor cafes work well), sit back with a Land Shark in your hand and watch the sights. It really is the best show in town. For the really adventurous souls, go during [Fantasy Fest](#), in late October. By city decree, body paint qualifies as clothing during Fantasy Fest, as long as there is a (very minimal) personal covering as well. You will truly see the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly! If you decide to go to Fantasy Fest, make sure you get your reservations at least 6 months in advance. Otherwise there is not a room to be had on the island.

Here's the final secret: Getting out of Key West. Remember that US Hwy 1 is a two-lane road, all the way back north as well. Everyone comes down to party on a Friday afternoon/evening and leaves on a Sunday afternoon. Never try to leave Key West the afternoon following a major festival, or any Sunday afternoon. Plan your retreat in advance.



That's about it. If you've never been to Key West, you don't know what you're missing. If you're not sure about going, give us a call. Becky and I ride down to the [Southernmost Point](#) at least a couple of times a year, just to escape the mainland madness for some relaxation. We may not know everything about the island, but we guarantee you we've got some friends there that do, and that can arrange just about anything for visitors. Oh, and if you don't know about the rooftop bar and the sunset green flash, you truly haven't spent enough time in Key West!

—Doug

[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!]

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. [Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the March 2015 edition of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]*

Mindset?

By Doug Westly

Ok, I'm going on a rant here. Actually, it is more of a quest for an explanation, and it comes from a scene I witnessed just this last week.

I was headed out in our truck, running errands one morning, when I saw a rider coming out of an adjacent neighborhood, pulling onto the main thoroughfare in our area. The rider was on a newer Gold Wing, but that was not really what caught my attention. It was his riding gear that stunned me. He was wearing (top to bottom) a good full-face helmet, a high quality, armored mesh, hi-visibility jacket, full-finger gloves and shorts and sandals. WHAT?



What kind of mindset does it take to recognize that you need to protect your upper body but somehow believe everything below the waist is going to be magically immune to danger?

Everyone knows I'm a big proponent of ATGATT. I campaign against t-shirts, jeans (my biggest pet peeve), sneakers and any other kind of non-safety outerwear. I even had a long, drawn-out discussion with noted motorcycle journalist Ken Condon on what constitutes acceptable risk and managed a begrudging affirmation of my position from him. I count that as one of my life's memorable achievements, by the way. However, I also recognize that riders have different personal safety considerations. This one, on the other hand, has me completely stumped. The Gold Wing rider turned onto the highway in front of me and I actually hoped he was going to turn into the upcoming gas station where I had already planned to stop. I have never approached a rider to question their safety gear choices, but this time I was ready. It is not that I was going to reproach him for his choices, but I really did want to know his rationale for them. Unfortunately the rider did not stop, so I'll never know.

Here is the cold fact. Statistically as a motorcycle rider, you are more likely to suffer a lower extremity injury (about 70-80% of the time) than any other kind in a crash. Doesn't it make sense to protect the lower half as you would the top part?

This is only the latest example of other strange safety statements we've seen lately. A couple of weeks earlier it was a guy on a cruiser in front of us that was wearing nothing up top but a t-shirt that said "Dead Men Tell No Tales - Think Safety!" Really?

Certainly everyone should be free to make choices. I am not going to berate anyone for putting on their gym clothes for an Iron Butt ride. Sometimes though I just don't understand their thought processes when it comes to safety.

Whenever you are out riding, take a moment as you encounter other riders. Examine their choices in safety gear. If nothing else, it will get you thinking about your own approach to safety. It may also provide you with some entertainment, or at least the opportunity to go... "WHAT?"

Ride safe! – Doug Westly



South Director's Report

Let's hope the worst is behind us once again regarding the hurricane season...

The forecasters' predictions seem to be really close to the reality of this year's season. We should now be able to look forward to our best riding weather just as many of our northern MST members contemplate when to winterize the rides. Do any of you remember how to do that???

While Kim and I were away for two weeks in September, the three RTE's happened as usual! I'll share our adventures in the next Gator Tale. Meanwhile, look for Tom's and Doug's reports below.

I counted on the kindness of the Southies' for details about the Sunday Brunch Ride to the Outpost Grill in Indiantown. And they came through! Though only four ventured out, all highly recommended that we schedule a lunch ride there in the coming months. Food, service and location were all praised!! Thanks to Ellen, Jim, Buck and Don!



A small group for the South ride to the Outpost Grill in Indiantown. We'll definitely be back!

Now that we've wrapped up our Brunch rides in September, we will kick around the idea of Dinner rides for next summer's RTEs. Several States have experimented with the concept as a way to beat the heat, and still have members gather. Of course, some may choose to 4-wheel it for a variety of reasons. Remember, all brands and tire counts are always welcome!! Feel free to chime in with thoughts and suggestions. The goal of course is to increase participation among the membership!

What's Next??

We have three LUNCH rides set up for October! We continue to spread out the destinations to entice as many of you as we can!! On the **7th**, join the Southies at the **LaBelle Brewery Company, in LaBelle!!** Though our libations will be alcohol-free, the menu and facility look too nice to pass up!! On the following **SUNDAY, the 15th**, join Tom for the East Central Lunch Ride, when we return to a favorite location, **Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House, in Oak Hill!** Tom is working this lunch ride around another commitment. And on the **28th**, join Doug for the West Central Lunch Ride, which heads to **KiKi's Egg House in Fort Meade**, another new-to-us destination. Don't let the name fool you, the menu looks terrific whether for breakfast or for lunch!

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...

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Jim Faulkner

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Stephen Albert

Mike Halburnt

Robert Holder

Buck Jones

Norman Nelson

Jamie Rohrbaugh

Roger Spice

Brian Van Scoy



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.

Random Ramblings!!

We're at the end of our BRUNCH rides for this year. Cooler temps and longer rides await!!

With 3 rides a month, you have plenty of chances to invite a friend along and introduce them to our group!! More ITRs are available now...

We will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

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

East-Central Ride – Kountry Kitchen with Love, Vero Beach, FL – Tom Blake



Good turnout for some pretty good food at Kountry Kitchen in Vero

A refreshingly cool, low humidity start to the first day of fall, a nice ride to Kountry Kitchen with Love in Vero and even a pleasant ride home afterward. Thank-you Mother Nature for the beautiful weather. Thank you Kountry Kitchen for the good food and service.

Nine of us met at the rendezvous in Palm Bay. Included were Eckart and wife Joann – a really pleasant surprise as we hadn't seen them in a while. They're just back from the Adirondacks of New York where they'd been happily tooling around on their Spyder. Regulars Mike and Terry – good riders whose support is very much appreciated. And then from the Space Coast BMW Riders, who've been enjoying Kountry Kitchen for about 30 years and turned me onto it, there was Ed, Marty 1, Marty 2, Glen... and Bill, who said he was drawn out by the good weather, his first ride in a while.

The Brevard group took about an hour to get to the restaurant via some back roads, one of which even the BMW guys hadn't been on before. Lots of favorable comments about that as we

were getting off. Thanks to Terry for reminding me of Fleming Grant Rd. It is a hidden gem. Also, Micco Rd has a couple of dog legs that can be taken at speed and, of course, that's exactly what we did.

We met Don and Ellen from the southeast at the restaurant – these two, I'm finding, really like to ride. Then Alan showed up from north of Orlando (this time wearing long pants under his riding gear - he said it way too cold for shorts). Usually Alan arrives at least 30 minutes early but this time got there right at 9:30. So I suspect he started with shorts and turned back to change. How about it, Alan? And finally Vero guy Larry popped in... wearing, yes, shorts. (riding pants now stashed in a saddlebag). But he didn't come far and was just back from summer in New England. Anyway, thanks to all for taking part. I hope you enjoyed it.

The folks at Kountry Kitchen were ready for us and we started taking seats about quarter after. As mentioned, the food was pretty good. Just ask Ellen about her whipped cream topped pecan and peach waffle. Sitting across from her, I was getting a serious sugar high just smelling it. Taking orders, keeping cups and glasses topped off, delivering hot food and taking really nice pictures – our servers were on top of it all.

Next up for us is a lunch ride to Goodrich's Seafood in Oak Hill on October 15th (this is a weekend change and a Sunday). We all like sitting on the covered deck and gazing out at the lagoon as we gab and chow down on good seafood. So, start making plans now and come join us if you can. It's a worthy destination..

West Central Lunch Ride – The Shamrock Inn, Floral City, FL – Doug Westly



Unfortunately, a lot of our local MSTA'ers missed out on a great ride on Saturday. Even with the addition of Doug offering a guided ride to the restaurant over some of the best backroads in central FL, only Brian Van Scoy from Sebring decided to join him for the ride and/or the first lunch meetup of the season. No rain and breaks in the clouds offered great shaded riding through the tree canopies and sunlight beams up to Floral City. Doug and Brian had to maneuver around a flock of turkeys taking flight across the road at one point, and then pause for a

few stately sandhill cranes to meander out of their way a little later on.

The little Shamrock Inn, tucked away in Floral City, did its usual great job of food and drink as well for the duo. Hopefully with the weather cooling off and dry times ahead we'll see more of our riders taking advantage of the October and November lunch meetups! Next month the West Central plan is to head to Kiki's Egg House in Ft Meade for lunch!



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 South Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, October 7th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **LaBelle Brewing Company**, 670 W. Hickpochee Ave., **LaBelle, FL** ☎ (863) 703-2903 ([map](#))

Description: BACK TO LUNCH RIDES! Another new-to-us destination!! And a chance to sample some ice cream on the way home.

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

MSTA Florida East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Sunday, October 15th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Goodrich Seafood & Oyster House**, 253 River Rd., **Oak Hill, FL** ☎ (386) 345-3397 ([map](#))

Description: Just too good to pass up!!

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

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

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

Location: **KiKi's Egg House**, 720 N. Charleston Ave, **Fort Meade, FL** ☎ (863) 285-6072 ([map](#))

Description: And the "newness" continues this month as well.

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

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 East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, November 4th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Renegades On The River Restaurant**, 1171 County Rd 309, **Crescent City, FL**
☎ (386) 524-4052 ([map](#))

Description: Another new restaurant recommended by a north Florida member who's eaten there. It's a little west of Crescent City next to the St John's River. Pictures of the place look very promising. Lots of good roads up that way. We'll give Three Bananas a rest this year.

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

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

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

Location: **Paul's Kitchen**, 116 N 4th Ave, **Wauchula, FL** ☎ (863) 773-0292 ([map](#))

Description: Celebrate Veterans Day with us! And another new-to-us destination!! Down home vibe and grub!!

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

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, November 18th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Upper Deck**, 5386 Darlene St, **Spring Hill, FL** ☎ (352) 340-5155 ([map](#))

Description: An awesome place!! And another new-to-us destination!!

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/

More Contact Information			
Kim Longacre Newsletter Editor editor@flmsta.org	P. 'Van' VanSteelant FL State Director ☎ (561) 386-2594 busavanflmsta@gmail.com	Tom Blake East Central Area Rep ☎ (321) 794-6147 tblake1@cfl.rr.com	Doug Westly West Central Area Rep ☎ (813) 928-1663 flwingrdr@msn.com

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!