



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

September 2024 - Volume 18 Issue 9

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Feature Article

Reflections on MSTA's 2024 FlyBy Week

By Tom Blake

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

**MSTA 2024 FlyBy Week
August 19-25, 2024, Marietta, OH**

Next to STAR, the national Sport Touring Association Rendezvous, FlyBy Week is the most attended rally in the MSTA. I believe there were 170 or so

registered for this one, though not all attended all week long. Norm Kern puts on a great event but the hills and mountains of southeast Ohio and West Virginia offer some of the most thrilling riding you can find anywhere east of the Rockies. The routes are almost entirely through rural countryside. With few exceptions on a handful of routes, what towns you encounter are very small.



MSTA FlyBy Week Rally in Ohio



Tom in the Big Muskie

There were 36 road routes plus variations and another 11 ADV routes, fanning out in all directions, each with detailed descriptions ready for downloading onto your GPS from the event website. Plus, another 7 EZ routes for non-GPS use. Most included lunch stops in little mom and pop eateries in small towns. Some featured destinations such as the Big Muskie, the New River Bridge and gorge, a ferryboat crossing of the Ohio River and covered bridges – to name just a few. Choosing which route to ride each day was often based upon its length, attractions, riding ease or difficulty and direction from Marietta (in case of localized inclement weather).

I covered close to 1300 miles in the six days that I rode (Monday through Saturday), so about 215 miles per day. The longest was 235 miles, the shortest 186. Ride time was 5 to 6 hours each day plus lunch stops and breaks. With over 36 road routes, one could ride a different route each day for 6 years without doing the same

route twice.

The Marietta Comfort Inn and Suites was the host hotel once again. And this year, the Fairfield Inn immediately next door was the overflow option. I personally prefer the Fairfield so booked there. Some folks prefer to camp – there were two options.

After an aggressive day of riding, what could be more enticing than a delicious meal at a nice restaurant. And downtown Marietta has some really nice ones. Norm arranged for a shuttle to town and back on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. A food truck was supposed to be at the hotel Wednesday (heard some talk that it didn't make it). Then there are more eateries closer by, including one or two which are walkable from the hotels. Since I drove up, I could provide transportation for five.



Relaxing on the Ohio River

On top of all that, there are other aspects of Marietta which make it unique and interesting. For example, there's just something really relaxing and magical about being next to the storied Ohio River. Unlike some, this river is wide, unhurried and not at all muddy. And watching large clusters of barges being slowly and masterfully pushed upriver or down is just sort of spellbinding. Marietta is one of the oldest towns west of the Appalachians and has some really nice old homes. Then there's the Mound Cemetery which includes at its center a prehistoric Adena burial mound – 47 steps, I believe it is, to the top. Many who fought in our War of Independence from Great Britain later lived in Marietta and are interred in that cemetery.

This was the third consecutive year that I've attended. It's about 900 miles from home and took me a day and a half to get up there from east-central Florida – about 13 hours of actually moving and all on the super slabs (I-95, I-26 and I-77). Coming home, I made it in 14 hours total time stopping only for gas, snacks and short rests – 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. But then I slept in for the next two days.

I-77 is West Virginia's turnpike. There are three toll plazas between the Virginia-West Virginia line and Marietta. My E-PASS Uni transponder made short work of all three. The southern part of I-77 in WV is mountainous and quite curvy. Lots of fun, but I avoid being on the outside in curves when passing big trucks. Virginia has two long tunnels through mountains. They're actually fun once you convince yourself to ignore the possibility of a cave-in.

Other states along the route tend to monitor speeds a lot more than in Florida. The result is far fewer excessive speeders. Virginia seems to be the strictest. And Virginia cops are often tucked away in depressions where only the tops of their windshields can be seen from a distance. Radar detectors are illegal there, too. But back in Florida, it's a free for all. I estimate many are doing 85 or 90. Some **rip** past and must be doing 100 or better. I noted at least 3 of those idiots after dark as I was coming home. Talk about outrunning your headlights.

Both going up and coming back, I hit Charlotte on the weekend – probably the best days to get through there. I do not recommend attempting that metropolis during the work week. Jacksonville is busy but not in the same league. Also, the section of I-77 south of town where the beltways connect was stop and go or just creeping along both going up and coming back so it's probably a systemic problem. Google Maps routed me onto the west beltway to save time going up.

As most of you know, August is probably the worst month to be outdoors in Florida and coastal Georgia. It's why I've trailered the RT each time. But next year, if I go, I might just try leaving about 3 or 4 a.m. and riding up. Once you get out of the humidity, higher temperatures aren't so intolerable. I don't remember even sweating up in Ohio. 85° or 95° in low humidity is no problem. But I was drenched after 20 minutes of unloading my trailer and car here at home.

This year, morning and late evening temperatures in Marietta were in the 50's and 60's. Mesh with a jacket rain liner was adequate on my fully faired RT in the morning until maybe 10 o'clock or so. A light jacket or long-sleeved shirt worked great for late evening socializing outdoors. The first part of the week never got into the 80's. Then by Friday and Saturday, it was in the mid-90's in the afternoon. Neither extreme was even close to comparable to how it would feel in Florida.

In addition to my long-time riding pal, Ken from central NC, I rode with and became friends with Rick (OH), Jim (NC), Gordon (OH) and Bernie (OH). I look forward to riding with them again – perhaps at Big Lynn Lodge and/or the NGC.

If you're looking for a rally with an unending number of curvy and hilly rural roads, great history and scenery, really good eateries and attractions and friendly fellow rally-goers... this is one of the best.

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

Summer Heat! By Doug Westley



It's that time of year again. Becky and I rode back from the Riding Into History vintage bike gathering in St Augustine. On the way home, the ambient temperature readout on Becky's new VFR1200FD told her it hit 95° as we rode through the Ocala forest. Our trip home was 4 hours in the Florida heat.

Every year starting about this time and for the next 4-5 months, all of us in Flatistan (central and south Florida) face this same challenge...the heat. There are lots of ways to combat the heat. Some motorcycle owners just say the heck with it and don't ride. I discount them as fair-weather riders.

The real answer is to recognize the heat factor and plan for it.

For short rides, pick the right time. If you can ride first thing in the morning, you can usually get in several hours of bearable temperatures from dawn to about 11 am or so. The same thing applies for the afternoon and evening hours. After about 4 pm, riding becomes fun again.

If you want to ride in the middle of the day during our hot season, there are a couple of strategies to help you out. First off, don't think that riding in a t-shirt and shorts will make you feel cooler. The blazing sun on your skin will only cook you like a Thanksgiving Turkey. Besides that, you have pledged to wear ATGATT, right? Armored mesh gear is the way to go. The air flows through it and the gear keeps the sun off.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. If you wait until you're thirsty to stop for a drink (of water!), then you're already dehydrating. Drink early, drink often. If you're riding longer distance and don't want to stop, invest in a Camelbak® or other water supply system that you can draw from on the ride.

There are lots of commercial cooling vests, rags, etc, on the market. There is even an electric A/C system available for motorcycles. I've tested it, and it works, but it seems bulky and a little impractical, at least for my riding style.

Want some easy, low-cost A/C while you ride? Take a bottle of cold water and pour it over your shirt, then immediately put your mesh jacket on and ride. The air flowing through the jacket turns that wet t-shirt into a cooling vest. Even in 95° weather in Florida, it will keep you cool for at least 30-45 minutes. The jacket keeps the sun off the shirt and that, combined with our humidity, prevents the shirt from drying out too quickly.

Whatever you do, watch for the signs of heat-related illnesses. Don't overdo it. Take frequent breaks.

Finally, watch out for each other as well as yourself. Let's all take care as we ride during the hot summer months!

Ride safe! – Doug Westly



South Director's Report

Ah, with Labor Day behind us and now that summer's over....

We only have 3 more months of 80's and 90's to contend with. And our members and friends continue to make the most of our ride-to-eat opportunities! Please check out the awesome ride reports from Tom and Doug. Truly positive vibes out there. Join us, won't you?!?

Our South brunch ride to Harry and the Natives in Hobe Sound was another example. Buck, JR, Jim, and Bill met me at the rather busy Wawa and then we cruised the scenic routes up to Harry's. This was a way-east location, so we were pleasantly surprised to have Mike Clark join us from Sun City Center!! 167 miles one way!! The rest of us didn't break 50 miles...

Besides the 2 and 3 wheelers, we were blessed with the presence of Dianne, Dan, Denise, and Kevin, who made their way on 4! Remember, it only matters that you show, not what *brung* you there!!



Good food, good service, eclectic setting, terrific company.... A wonderful way to spend a stunningly beautiful August morning! And for me personally, this ride was my first since my hip revision... and on my new Suzuki GT+. So far so good!

I'm sure you've been getting the emails about the upcoming STAR '24 in Texas. Be sure to check them out. And crack the cover of the latest STARreview for even more!!! Plans are being finalized, routes will be announced and made available for download, the schedule will be shared.... And you all wisely bought your raffle tickets on August 25th and saved a bunch of money by doing so, right?!?!



Great August day for riding to Hobe Sound to Harry's

What's Next??

IT'S STILL SUMMER FOR US... BREAKFAST RIDES AND BRUNCH RIDES!! Pay closer attention to the calendar and ride announcements this summer!

The **South Brunch Ride** rides into the **OK Corral Gun Club**, outside **Okeechobee**, on **September 7th**. The **East Central Breakfast Ride** lands at **The Hen House Eatery** on **September 21st**. This is a return trip to **Sebastian**. And be sure to get to a new-to-us location, **Eggs 27**, in **Lake Wales** on **September 28th** for the **West Central Brunch Ride**.

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

Membership News!!

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

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 added a new member this month: **Peter Komatz of Jupiter**. Welcome!

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Robert Miller Carl Mobley

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Michael Ewanus Jim Faulkner Thomas Kusen Jamie Rohrbaugh Bob Summers

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!!

With 3 rides a month, you have plenty of chances to invite a friend along and introduce them to our group!! 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 – Le Crepe de France-Downtown, Melbourne, FL – Tom Blake

This month we sampled *Le Crepe De France – Downtown* in Melbourne. You might say it was our tip-of-the-hat to the Paris Olympics. Ten showed up including four Space Coast BMW Riders Club members – Ed & Debbie and Glenn & Marie plus two non-members - Larry and Andy. Members included LD couple Mike and Star from the Tampa area. Alan rode in from north of Orlando on a new-to-him BMW – haven't seen him in a while. And moi, of course. A nice little gathering.

I was really surprised that *Le Crepe* could so easily get us all seated together along one end of their smallish dining area. The A/C felt wonderful after an overnight shower thoroughly moistened up the air outside. Most everyone ordered crepes of one sort or another. Mine was made of buckwheat flour loaded with fresh berries and a side of whipped cream. So good! The service was also excellent. It will not be a surprise if individual attendees start going back on their own.

Next up: We finish off our breakfast get-togethers next month with a hop down south to the town of Sebastian and the *Hen House Eatery*. It's at 11632 S US-1, which is in an old strip center (currently anchored by a NAPA Auto Parts store) just south of the city limit. I tried them out in June and thought the place was clean, attractively decorated, and the food and service were very good.

West Central Lunch Ride – Rooster's Café, Brooksville, FL – Doug Westly



If you weren't at last Saturday's West Central FLMSTA brunch at **Rooster's Cafe**, you missed out! We had absolutely spectacular weather (for August in Florida, at least) for the ride! It was low 70s in the morning, and the roads around Brooksville, some of the undisputed best riding roads in Florida, were dry and welcoming. Some of the attendees rode 100 miles or more just to get to the restaurant! Lots of great stories told around the table, and I suspect one or more might have actually been true! Rooster's was as welcoming as always; great food and super service!

Next month, we are headed to a new restaurant, **Egg27 in Lake Wales**, so make plans to meet your West Central FLMSTA riding friends there! *Ride Safe, Everyone!* Doug

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 Brunch Ride

When: **Saturday, September 7th, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**
 Location: **OK Corral Gun Club**, 9449 48th Street Northeast, **Okeechobee, FL** ☎ (863) 357-2226 ([map](#))
 Description: Time to return to the Corral!! Brunch at the Hitching Post Cafe!!
 Contact: Van, busavanflmsta@gmail.com, or ☎ (561) 386-2594

MSTA Florida East Central Breakfast Ride

When: **Saturday, September 21st, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM**
 Location: **Hen House Eatery**, 1632 US-1, **Sebastian, FL** ☎ (772) 228-8907 ([map](#))
 Description: Recently visited and worth a return trip!!
 Contact: Tom, tblake1@cfl.rr.com, or ☎ (321) 794-6147

MSTA Florida West Central Brunch Ride

When: **Saturday, September 28th, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Location: **Eggs 27 Breakfast & Lunch**, 19301 US Hwy 27, **Lake Wales, FL** ☎ (863) 949-6941 ([map](#))

Description: Just west of our Holiday Lunch location. Easy-peasy to find and plenty of parking. And the menu looks terrific!!

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, October 5th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Lake Harris Hideaway**, 1912 Lane Park Rd, **Tavares, FL** ☎ (352) 343-3585 ([map](#))

Description: Just a perfect setting for our return to LUNCH rides!! Join us, won't you?!

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

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, October 12th, 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: Just a wonderful, Old Florida setting with great country vittles!! Do make time, and reservations, for the terrific Eco Tour. You will be glad you did!!

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

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, October 26th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Sleepy Hollow Fish Camp**, 10333 E Gobbler Dr, **Floral City, FL** ([map](#))

Description: Waterfront, good vibe and tasty menu!!

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

MSTA Fall on Two Wheels Just For Fun

When: **Friday-Sunday, October 4-6, 2024**

Location: **Two Wheels of Suches**, 1915 GA-60, **Suches, GA** ☎ Hotel phone: 706-973-1671 ([map](#))

Description: Our 3rd informal gathering (IG)/(Just For Fun (JFF)) event organized by Georgia members of the Motorcycle Sport Touring Association (MSTA)

Contact: <https://ridemsta.com/ga-suches>

Coordinator: Chris Buck chris.buck@pm.me

MSTA STAR 2024

When: **Saturday-Thursday, October 19-24, 2024**

Location: **Y.O. Ranch Hotel**, 2033 Sidney Baker St, **Kerrville, TX** ☎ Resort phone: 830-257-4440 ([map](#))

Description: **STAR - annual national rally for the MSTa**, and this year, we're riding in the Texas Hill Country.

In addition to great riding opportunities, there will be a full schedule of fun activities, including:

Welcome Ceremony, New Members/First Time Attendees Meeting, New Members Ride, Ladies of the MSTa Meet & Greet, Annual Members Meeting, Lunch Ride, Closing Banquet & Awards, Annual Bike Raffle- a Canyon Red 2024 Suzuki GSX-8s, Event T-Shirts, Vendors and Seminars

Contact: <https://ridemsta.com/star/>

Coordinator: Dennis Villarose ipnman2002@yahoo.com

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!