

Key West Ride 04 30 2011

The Key West ride was a long (one full week and 4,000 miles), tiring, beautiful and fun ride. We had 8 bikes and 10 riders. The riders were: Mark Frueh, Bob Didrickson, Kellie Becket, Lee Lasseigne, Lee Grunwald, Stephanie Stewart, Bill & Linda Hay (aka Barbie & Ken) and Jim & Cindy Copas.

We met early at 5am at my wife's and my home in Plainfield, Ill, with the exception of Bob and Stephanie who we joined for breakfast in Seymour, Indiana. Bob and Stephanie were 'escorted safely' the night prior to Seymour by Stephanie's husband Tracey and Ken Kutschke...who joined us all for a wonderful breakfast and saw us off on the balance of our journey south.

We rode south by south east arriving that evening at Mark's brothers home on the northeast side of Atlanta where we spent the first night. We had sandwiches, beer and an overall wonderful time even though Mark, while requesting and getting the approval of his brother (who also loves motorcycles) for us to stay in their beautiful home...had failed to get a similar approval from his sister in law! Needless to say...she was most a large part of our stay...in a bit of shock! Understandably so, I believe.

Up early the next morning and off to Parrish, Florida where my lovely wife Cindy & I have a second home that we affectionately refer to as the 'LOVE SHACK'!

On the way further south, Lee Lasseigne suggested that we stop by his sweet Mother's home in Lake City, Florida where we were met by his welcoming Mother...who treated us to lunch and refreshments. She was very happy to see Lee and hugged us all as we arrived and left...sweet woman...who warned us all that Lee can be very ill tempered in the morning hours!

After leaving the Lake City area we were separated for about 75 miles, however since we all have each other's contact data and such...we re-grouped about 100 miles north of the Tampa area.

We safely arrived at the 'LOVE SHACK' around 6pm that evening and NO ONE was faster to the pool than Lee Lasseigne...although it did appear that Bob had something for the blow up alligator raft! Cindy met us all at the 'LOVE SHACK' and graciously had dinner and drinks ready for us...where we all grilled, drank, listened to music, swam and generally tried to relax our sore bottoms as we prepared for the next morning's ride further south...but not before we washed the bikes and safely stored them all in the garage for safe keeping.

Onward south...while I love the GPS option on my Goldwing...I still have no idea how we were directed through that enormous parking lot in Naples, Florida while trying to connect with 41S...the old alligator highway. Anyway...off we went and we stopped in the Everglades National Park to relax and see some alligators. I don't think I have ever seen so many bugs on motorcycles before...Stephanie and I spent 20-30 minutes trying to clean them off our bikes with limited success.

So...onward we rode...Subway sandwiches just north of Largo, Florida (not Stephanie's favorite food!)

The ride down the Keys is very special and beautiful! Blue water and blue skies on both sides of you...a must see for avid riders. Key deer in the southern keys...about the size of a mid-sized dog.

Well...we arrived safely in Key West where we checked into our hotel and I am sure all enjoyed a welcomed shower...we agreed to meet later that evening in the lobby area...however I ran into Linda in the parking lot at the bikes and I told her that Cindy and I were already ready to go...and please tell everyone that we would meet them at a restaurant later (remember we had each other's mobile numbers). Cindy and I parked the bike and walked around and finally ended up at the Southern Most Point on Key West which is also as you know...the Southern Most Point in the United States...what you may not know is that it was nearly impossible for everyone else to find the well marked and frequently visited HEAVILY marked MAJOR tourist attraction on this relatively small island! It took approximately 90 minutes and 200 telephone calls for us all to find each other...which we finally did I am happy to say. It did give me a little concern however, I mean how did we find our way to Key West in the first place and when there...we could not seem to find the SOUTHERN MOST POINT?



Oh well...we had our picture taken by others gathered there and off we went to find a restaurant...wow, that can be a task if you ask others what they want to eat...well, we finally arrived at one restaurant that we all could agree to and they seemed to be closing...the waiter was a bit contrary...however the owner saw we were a fairly large group... hungry and thirsty as well, so she graciously agreed to accommodate us...all was well.

That night I know we all slept like babies...we had completed a 2000 mile trek south in temperatures ranging from 56 degrees to 100 degrees. We were tired.

The next morning Cindy and I left to return to the 'LOVE SHACK' (for obvious reasons of course) and everyone else spent an additional day in Key West...relaxing and enjoying everything the Island has to offer.

The next day the rest of the group arrived at the 'LOVE SHACK' and once again we enjoyed a wonderful dinner together...however this time Cindy & I were treated to a lovely dinner by the group at a nearby restaurant.

The next day it was time to begin our ride north. By the time we got to northern Florida, Mark had received a call which required him to leave the group's ride through primarily back roads and take the highway in order to get home as quickly as possible...hope all went well Mark! The rest of us trekked onward. In Georgia...south of Atlanta, Lee, Lee and Bob split off to go visit Bob's sister in the Atlanta area and then to Bobs property in Tennessee prior to returning to the real world.

Onward north...Kellie, Stephanie, Bill and Linda and I all spent the night in LaGrange, Georgia. Early the next morning we were off again, this time riding through beautiful Alabama...which had unfortunately just been hit by a string of tornadoes...and we did see the evidence of the damage along the way.

We made our way to the Murfreesboro, Tennessee area where Kellie and Stephanie decided to split off and take highways back home while Bill, Linda and I rode onward spending the night in Vincennes, Indiana. Next morning we were on the bikes again and home in the Chicagoland area by noon. A long, tiring, beautiful and fun ride...thanks to all who went on this ride and a special thanks to my wife Cindy.

Kindest Regards,

Jim Copas, Ride Leader