

Smokies Ride

Ride attendees included Bill & Linda H, Kim & Sharon B, & Larry T. We left Friday, September 7th with threatening skies in our rear view mirror until reaching southern Indiana. We clicked off 560 miles stopping for the night at the Mount Aire Motel in Harlan, Kentucky. The hotel gift shop included figurines made of coal and bumper stickers supporting the coal industry. Each room included a piece of souvenir coal for the guest to take home. The motel clerk became confused upon receiving travelers checks from Larry, stated he had never seen them before, and later a waitress proclaimed to Bill "You guys aren't from around here, are you?" Our northern accents and manners stuck out like sore thumbs.

The next morning we continued through beautiful countryside crossing through southwest Virginia toward Bristol, Tennessee where we entered the "Snake" 33 miles of US 421 consisting of 489 curves, 3 mountains, and one valley. We met Gloria, Mike and their friend James at the Shady Valley Country Store for lunch. After lunch we followed Gloria and Mike back to their house where beverages and conversation lasted well into the evening. We enjoyed a great meal of beer-can chicken and a dip in the hot tub before retiring for the evening.

On Sunday, with Gloria leading, we headed for the Blue Ridge Parkway, and rode on some side roads that Larry proclaimed rivaled the "Tail of the Dragon". After a nice lunch at a restaurant with yet another great view we headed for Asheville where we said goodbyes to our gracious hosts Gloria & Mike. We continued our backroad venturing where Bill would veer off the announced route to explore a curvy, scenic road. We stopped for the night in Middlesboro, KY.

On the final day of our trip, everyone quickly grew bored of the expressway driving and at Louisville we cut off and wandered across southwest Indiana through the Hoosier National Forest, stopping at a local diner in Marengo, IN for a great local meal and enjoyed the small town culture of southern Indiana! We finally arrived home a little after dark logging in 1,664 miles. Many thanks to Gloria & Mike for their hospitality and leading us on great roads in North Carolina!

Bill Hay