

22 Days out West

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Day one started out with overcast skies and light rain between Little Rock and Tulsa. I took the super slab to Checotah, OK, and then OK 72 and US 64 into Tulsa for lunch with the Nichols. I routed from there to Ponca City via OK 39 and US 60 through Burbank. With threatening weather brewing, I reached Kaw Dam on the border of the Osage Indian Reservation, and the mapping software showed no continuous route. Within 5 minutes



of arriving near Kaw Lake, the bottom dropped out, and the heaviest rain I saw the entire trip fell for about 20 minutes. Nancy made a wonderful chicken dish, and after dinner Clayton gave us the essential tour of Ponca City as only the chief of police could do. One of the highlights was the seventeen foot Pioneer Woman bronze sculpture on Monument road. On the other end of town sits a rather large oil storage facility. As you get close, you can smell, what used to be, the smell of money.

Day two took me north on US 77. I did a stair step route around the southwest side of Wichita and Hutchinson, KS via a combination of KS 55, 49, and 14. I then picked up KS 96 all the way to Scott City, KS where I found myself wondering why no one had yet harvested all the glass insulators off the dilapidated power poles that ran along the railroad track for miles and miles of KS 96. Broken power lines and leaning poles that long ago carried current dotted the landscape. I spent the night in an out building of The Guest House B&B. The trees around The Guest House were full of mourning doves cooing all around. It sounded like mating season. Dinner plans included a 30 block round-trip walking tour of Scott City and dinner at the Pizza Hut. On the way back, I stopped by the grocery store and picked up a pint of orange sherbet, polishing it off over about 40 minutes while watching LeBron James announce he was going to Miami. If you ever find yourself

needing to traverse Kansas east to west, I highly recommend KS 96.



Day three included more of KS and CO 96 and US 287 north out of Eads, CO. Entering Colorado, the first town is Towner. Then CO 86 out of Limon connects with CO 83 into Denver. CO 83 through Franktown is a nice scenic approach. I spent the night with nephew and niece, Matthew and Naomi.

Matt made a delicious chicken curry and rice dish that we enjoyed on the front porch. After dinner we rounded up the soccer ball where a mishap included a heel kick by me, sending the ball out into the one-way lanes of a parkway. The driver of a vehicle slowed down just enough for his right wheel to roll over the ball, creating a loud pop. We immediately set off for Walmart for a replacement. Once we returned, we realized we needed items for French toast in the morning, so we took a short bicycle trip to and from the grocery store.



Day four started with a perfect breakfast prepared by great niece Nila, including extra amounts of a wonderful Pomegranate and Lemon tea. After breakfast I was on my way up US 6, which quickly turned scenic as it winds through Clear Creek Canyon. Even Amtrak has a route that runs through the canyon. I picked up US 40 which took me over Berthoud Pass and through Winter Park and Steamboat Springs where I stopped for

lunch at The Egg and I. As usual, there were those determined bicyclists on the route, too. The sighting of these hill climbers usually humbles the folks on the motorized version. I know it does me. US 40 turned remote as it makes its way to Vernal, UT. I found a first-come, first-serve camp site at Steinaker SP north of Vernal. I quickly prepared the first of my freeze dried meals and fell asleep early in the evening. I needed my 35 degree sleeping bag that night.

Day five included more incredible scenery on UT 44 around Flaming Gorge NRA. The landscape in this area dates back to prehistoric times. There was plenty to see, but this trip was more about the route than the destination. I picked up WY 414 and WY 412 near Fossil Butte and then US 30 to McCammon, ID. The section of I



84 out of Pocatello turned into a hot and desolate stretch of desert pavement all the way to Twin Falls, ID. The occasional glimpses of the Snake River along the way led to a grand crossing of the river on US 93 in Twin Falls. I reserved a room on the spot at the Comfort Inn and had a bland dinner at J. Carino.

Day six was an interesting route along US 30 to Bliss, ID where I picked up ID 78 out of Hammett to Walters Ferry, ID. I crossed the Snake River 6 times this day. Each crossing was a welcome site since this stretch included some of the most remote desert areas I had travelled so far. I then took US 20 and US 26 north out of Vale, OR. This section included my first sight of the green onion crops which were on both sides of the road. I knew about the Idaho potatoes, and saw field



after field of them, but had no idea Idaho is also a big producer of green onions. US 26 winds its way westward through more of the Oregon desert, then up and over Eldorado Pass and Dixie Pass, which is in the heavily treed area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. I passed some really nice looking NF camp grounds and thought about camping instead of bedding down in the Best Western in John Day, OR. Since I had discovered a rear brake issue on the bike I

decided to get to civilization and access to the cell phone network. I was able to make contact with the BMW dealer in Portland and scheduled a drop off of the bike the next day. I had the worst meal of the trip at a locally owned Mexican restaurant and got to sleep early.

The next day I was up at 4:30AM and on my way by 5:30. The temperature was in the low 40's and soon dropped to 36, which triggered the ice warning alert on the bike computer. I had four layers on my upper body and the heated grips on high. Part of US 26 from John Day to Portland is a special section of the highway that follows the John Day River and passes through the heavily forested sections of Oregon.



Near the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, I approached a tree on the side of the road that first appeared to have a strange fungus growing on it. As I drew closer, I was able to make out the hundreds of pairs of shoes that had been tossed into this tree. There were no leaves, just shoes! Since I was worried about further damage to the brakes, I did not stop and capture a photo. This section also passes by Mt. Hood which presents a rather magnificent site in the distance and even more so as you get nearer. I made it to the BMW dealer in Portland where they were able to order the parts for next-day delivery. I decided to also let them do my 24K service while there. I walked two blocks to the Enterprise rental car shop and rented a car, loaded up all my gear and drove to Timberline Lodge where I would be spending the next 3 nights. Timberline Lodge is a special structure. All the materials used to construct it back in the 1930's were locally available. I tracked down fellow mountain climbers from Little Rock, Don and Taylor, and finally settled into our room after making five trips up three flights of stairs unloading all of my gear, which I estimated weighed about 150 pounds. I had a quick dip in the hot tub and swimming pool, then a shower and dinner. The next day we were scheduled for the mandatory mountaineering class starting at 8:00AM. We organized our gear based on the list we were provided and were quickly off to sleep.



After breakfast we met our guide, Chris, who is well qualified and a pleasure to be with. We spent five hours on the basics of ascending and descending snow-covered slopes, self arrest, and being roped together. We practiced going up and down slopes with the three of us connected. After the training we had a late lunch, and then I drove to Portland to return the car and pick up the bike. The service from the dealer in Portland was great, and this is generally indicative

of what a BMW motorcycle traveler can expect when faced with mechanical issues out on the road. By the time I made it back to Timberline, Don and Taylor had already gone to bed. We were scheduled to meet at midnight to begin our ascent of Mt. Hood. I grabbed a bowl of chicken noodle soup from the in-house restaurant and was asleep by 8:00PM. We all arose around 11:00, made it to the departure point and climbed into the snow cat for a ride up to around 8,000 feet. Leaving out a 3 to 4 hour climb to near the top of the ski lift makes the ascent more achievable. We rode up with about 10 other climbers, but there were only the four of us in our climbing group. Mount Hood was just as much fun as the first time I climbed it in 2005. In 2005 the Hogsback was 10 feet in width. This time it came to a thin peak. We ended up running three 200 foot pitches on about a 75 degree ice and snow slope to reach the summit. The perfect shadow pyramid of Hood was more magnificent this time with no cloud cover. Our timing allowed us to be able to see the sun come up from the summit. The descent back to the lodge was a major workout and sure took it out of us.

On Friday I was off to Bend, OR, taking the scenic NF 42 and 46 to Detroit, ID, then on ID 22 and US 20 to Sisters, ID. There I picked up ID 126 to the Rally site in Redmond. I registered for the rally and purchased a long sleeve commemorative shirt. At the rally on Saturday I learned how to right my bike if it ever falls over. It helps to have the pannier bags mounted, which keeps the bike from being right on the ground. I will be happy show anyone interested in learning the technique.



I spent two nights with the Martins in Bend, OR, traveling back and forth during the day to the rally. I saw Chris McNeil doing some crazy stunts on a S1000RR that included riding backwards standing upside down on his hands! There were also a few brave volunteer riders attempting tight precision turns on hilly terrain at low speeds. Balance is needed. Saturday night we had pizza and beer with other



friends and family on a lawn along the Deschutes River near Les Schwab Amphitheater where the Bare Naked Ladies were in concert.

Sunday, instead of taking the direct 160 mile route southward to Glacier NP, I chose a 263 mile route on US 20 through Sisters and took in McKenzie Pass, then NF 19 from Rainbow and over Cougar Dam to Oakridge where I had lunch. I owe Mike thanks for suggesting

going over McKenzie Pass. The road and scenery was near tops for the trip. Turning south on Rigdon road I covered a section of about 20 miles of unpaved forest service roads, following the North Fork of the Willamette River through the National Forest of the same name. This route took me near Kelsey Mountain. I came out on the Cascade Lakes Highway, which is a short straight gravel section that tees into OR 138. Back on the pavement, I traveled southward to the north entrance of Glacier NP. The big blue lake is mighty impressive. I was fortunate to find a fellow shutterbug who took my picture with Glacier Lake in the background. It was first-come, first-serve at Lost Creek CG in the south east corner of the park, but when I stopped to preview a site, I was immediately attacked by way too many mosquitoes. I then traveled up to Mazama Village and encountered pretty much the same thing. This led me to the Prospect Hotel B&B in Prospect, OR where I enjoyed a nice dinner of lasagna at the on-site restaurant. I met a BMW riding family from Fairfield, CA making circular day trips out of Prospect.



Monday was my last day in Oregon. It started with a great breakfast before I continued my trip on OR 66, OR 234, and through Grants Pass on US 199 into California. US 199 passes through the redwood forests in the Smith River NRA to Crescent City, CA. This was another great road on which to be entering a new state. The first glimpse of the ocean signaled that I was now on California time. I followed US 101 to CA 211 out through Ferndale to the Mattole

road. Traversing Mattole offered numerous challenges from the multi-layered asphalt patches, switchbacks, elevation changes, potholes, high winds, fog, and big rigged trucks with tandem trailers headed the opposite direction. After I saw