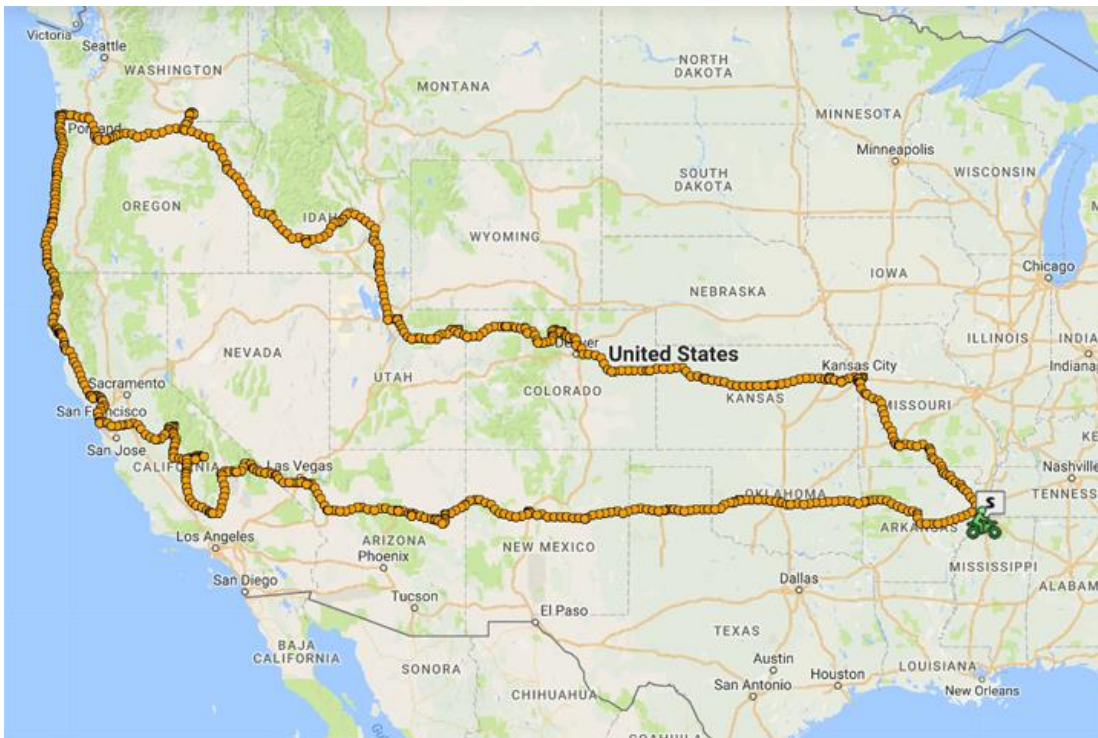


18th Annual Ride of a Lifetime!

In 2000, Karen and I enjoyed our first motorcycle vacation. We rode the Blue Ride Parkway, up through New England, into Canada around the city of Montreal, over to Niagara Falls, then to the Midwest to visit family in Indiana before returning back to our home in Atlanta. This was our first “ride of a lifetime”! But, who says we are only limited to one? Since then, we have taken a motorcycle vacation every year throughout North America. And, each trip is just as awesome as the first! Each year was another “Ride of a Lifetime”! And, this year was no different!

This year, our goal was to leave our home in Hernando, MS and head out to California to see the big trees, cross the Golden Gate Bridge, ride through Napa Valley, then up the Oregon Coast on highway 101 and stop at several National Parks along the way. We had 16 days to complete our 6,482 mile route.



6,482 Mile Route

We had been out West on the bike several times before, but always in the fall. During that time of year, everything is brown. Since this trip was planned for late spring, the landscape was much prettier due to the green and other colored plants that stood out in contrast against the brown desert background. Plus, the rivers were raging due to heavier than normal snowfall this past winter. This really added to the scenic beauty of this year’s trip!

We made the most of every day! Every morning, we were up early and on the road no later than 7:00 am, then every night we would end up in a hotel room around 9:00 pm. Not what most people would call your typical relaxing vacation, but, to us, this is what we live for!

California was awesome! Death Valley was a big surprise for both of us! It was more beautiful than what we had expected! We made it a point to arrive in Death Valley early. We were at the entrance that morning at 9:00 am. It was already 98 degrees! We rode through the Funeral Mountains Wilderness Area, then, down into the valley. An information board at the Furnace Creek Visitor's Center stated it would get up to 114 degrees that day. As we exited the park on the other side, we rode up out of the valley and through the mountain range again. By the time we exited the valley at 11:30 am, it was up to 103 degrees.



Death Valley



Kings Canyon

From there, we took the long way south around the Sierra Mountains to Kings Canyon National Park. We had never heard about this place before planning our vacation. First of all, we visited the General Grant Grove, a grove of sequoia trees in the park. Sequoia trees are the largest trees in the world by volume, not height. The General Grant tree is the second largest tree in the world at almost 270 feet tall and 107 feet around at the base. This tree is known as "The Nation's Christmas Tree". Next, we ride down into the canyon. Kings Canyon is one of the deepest canyons in America. It is over a mile and a half deep! The King's Canyon Scenic Byway is 50 miles of breathtaking beauty! A must for any bucket list!

After spending a day at King's Canyon, we rode on to Yosemite National Park. This park had been on our list for years. Absolutely gorgeous! The rivers were raging and the waterfalls flowing, it was the optimum time to visit! A guided tour around the valley floor was well worth the time. We also rented bicycles for a couple hours to see the sights. Half Dome, El Capitan and all the active waterfalls were just amazing! Looking up El Capitan and watch people climbing straight up the sheer, granite wall was something that was absolutely incredible! There was an entire campground dedicated to rock climbers that travel from all over the world to perform this difficult challenge. Yosemite National Park was everything thing we had heard and read!

The next day, we made it over to San Francisco to ride across the Golden Gate Bridge. We rode right through downtown San Francisco and across the bridge with no problem on a Friday afternoon. The bridge was just a magnificent as the pictures depict it! Then, we continued on

through Napa Valley. The green vineyards stood out against the golden hills. We really enjoy riding through agricultural areas across America and the Napa Valley area was a real treat!

The next stop was Redwood country and the Avenue of the Giants. Although not quite the diameter as the sequoias, redwood trees are the tallest trees on earth reaching heights of up to 375 feet! As you ride under the canopy of these tall trees, you really enjoy the majestic beauty of these great wonders of nature! Now, on to Oregon!

Oregon was just as awesome as California! Riding along the coast on highway 101 was a great thrill! What a beautiful coastline! The huge volcanic boulders in the sand along the emerald green coast were views that we will always remember! We stopped and walked along the beach around these boulders as the strong wind off the Pacific Ocean pelted us with grains of sand from the beach. We kept our helmets on and visors down, so we could see to walk around!



Karen on the Oregon Coast



Multnomah Falls

We continued our ride up into the northeast corner of the Oregon to visit a couple state parks, Ft Stevens and Ft Clatsop. After that, we ate lunch at the mouth of the Columbia River in Astoria. From there, we headed east to the Vista House where breathtaking views of the Columbia River Gorge can be seen. And, just down the road were several waterfalls with Multnomah Falls being one of the most popular. At 610 feet tall, it's the highest waterfall in the state! A paved path allows you to walk up and over the bridge that straddles the 69 foot second tier for a great view of the 542 foot first tier. By now, 10 days into our trip, our minds were saturated with scenery overload!

Now, it was time to start the journey back to Hernando, Mississippi. On the way home, we enjoyed lunch at the well-known, Joe's Kansas City BBQ. Some of the best BBQ that we had ever eaten and we live near Memphis! In 16 days, it only rained once for just a couple of hours! The scenery and the weather were just perfect! It truly was another "ride of a lifetime!"