

Eclipse 1000 Gold



Ring of Fire as Seen through a Protective Lens

Iron Butt Association (IBA) Requirements: Solar Eclipse 1000 Gold - ride at least 300 miles to your eclipse viewing location which **MUST** be within the path of the eclipse and view the eclipse at the time of the 'maximum view' of the eclipse for that location - 24 hours

To 'prove that you were at your viewing location at the maximum view of the eclipse, plan to arrive there 15 minutes before that time so your phone/spot device can send a 'ping' at that location. Plan to stay for 15 minutes after the maximum view time to be sure your device sends another 'ping'.

Total Eclipse vs Annular Eclipse (Britannica.com): Solar eclipses may be classified as either total, in which the Moon completely covers the Sun, or annular, in which the

Moon obscures all but an outer ring of the Sun.

(Timeanddate.com): An annular solar eclipse happens when the Moon covers the Sun's center, leaving the Sun's visible outer edges to form a "ring of fire" or annulus around the Moon.

On the way down to Allen, we stopped by Sulphur Springs, TX to visit the glass restrooms. The two restrooms located on the square were made of one-way mirrors where you could see out, but not in!

These were unique to say the least! Inside, you had a 360-degree view around you! According to the "50 Texas Monthly" website, the two restrooms cost the city \$54,000. Their goal was to be at the top of the

list for America's Best Restroom contest.



Glass Restroom



Can See Out, Not In

The square in Sulphur Springs was very nice, besides the unique restrooms, there was an awesome Veterans Memorial with an eternal flame. The courthouse was beautiful!

From there, we headed to Hutchins BBQ in McKinney, TX for lunch. We love their Texas Twinkies! We arrived 10 minutes before they opened. There was a long line waiting to get in!

A Texas Twinkie is a huge jalapeno pepper stuffed with brisket and cream cheese, then wrapped in

bacon and smoked. They're delicious!



Hutchins BBQ

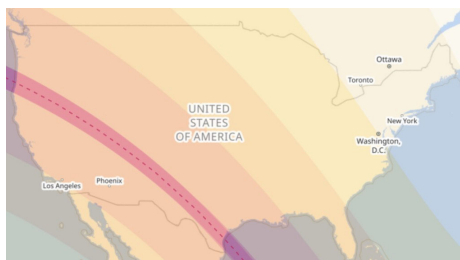
After lunch, we rode down to the Hilton Garden Inn about 10 miles away. We've stayed there several times in the past for the IBA's Big as Texas Party.

Our plan was to attend the Eclipse 1000 Pre-Ride RTE (Ride to Eat) at Two Rows Grill next to the Hilton Garden Inn. The RTE was scheduled for 6:00 pm Friday evening before the Annular Solar Eclipse on Saturday, October 14, 2023.

We ate dinner with 10 other long-distance riders. They came from Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi to see the eclipse in the maximum viewing path that angled across Texas.



Eclipse Pre-Ride Dinner



Path of the Eclipse

Saturday morning, our plan was to get an early start and ride down to the Bent Rim Grill in Leakey, Texas in time to view the eclipse, ride the Three Twisted Sisters, then finish our 1,000-mile ride in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

We started our ride the next morning at a RaceTrac gas station just down the road from the hotel. Several others from the dinner were there too! Official start time for us 4:07 am.

Traffic was light as we rode through Dallas, then over through Ft Worth. From there, we took backroads south all the way to Medina, the beginning of the Three Twisted Sisters.

I had heard about these Texas roads for years. It was finally time that Karen and I got to experience them!

From Ridermagazine.com: Three Hill Country Ranch Roads, 335, 336 and 337, are known throughout Texas as the Twisted Sisters, and riders come from near and far to enjoy them.

From RideTexas.com: This 100-mile loop is, without a doubt, among the best, most challenging motorcycle roads in the state. The route follows canyons and climbs jagged, steep hills; the roads offer

many tight, twisty curves with shear drop offs alongside and not much in the way of guardrails. In one 15-mile section, there are approximately 65 curves! Experienced riders bliss out on this ride. Beginners are cautioned to focus on the road—even when a panoramic vista pops up along the way. Don't forget to top off the gas tank before heading out.

At Medina, we headed west on Ranch Road 337 to Leakey. This road was a great introduction to the sisters! Beautiful Texas Hill Country on a curvy, winding road!

As we rode through Leakey, we noticed several people setting up tables along the road to sell souvenirs and food. Looked like they were expecting a big crowd. I'm sure they were disappointed since we didn't see crowds of any size.



Bent Rim Grill

Just outside of Leakey, we stopped at the Bent Rim Grill. Per the IBA rules for this ride, we must ride at least 300 miles to the maximum viewing path, then ping Spotwalla (location tracking program) at least 15 minutes prior to the exact time of annularity, then ping Spotwalla again 15 minutes afterward to show

you were stopped to watch the eclipse during full coverage. The Bent Rim Grill was 376 miles from our starting point that morning.

We arrived at 10:30 am. The time of annularity wasn't until 11:51 am. Do we go ahead and continue riding the sisters or do we stay here for an hour and 36 minutes? Do we have enough time to finish the 100-mile loop and be back in time for the viewing? We decided not to chance it and just take the long break, relax and eat. We're glad we did! We had plenty of time left on the clock!

The Bent Rim Grill was a perfect place for the viewing. They have a large outside pavilion. Part of it is covered and part of it is open. Plus, they have inside seating, along with a grill and souvenir shop. Several people were there to view the eclipse. Most of the crowd was motorcyclists, but there was also a Mazda Miata club there too. It was a nice size crowd, not too big. We couldn't have picked a better spot!

The grill served some awesome burgers with jalapeno-cheddar buns. Karen and I both enjoyed them!



Awesome View

We really enjoyed watching the eclipse, more so than I thought we

would! The special protective glasses gave us a very clear view of the sun as the moon passed in front of it. Being in the maximum viewing path allowed us to see the moon move inside the middle of the sun with a symmetrical thin ring of fire around it. Truly amazing!

15 minutes after the viewing, I pinged Spotwalla as required per the IBA ride rules. Now, it was time to finish the 3 Twisted Sisters! We had already ridden more than half of RR 337. From here, we headed up RR 336, then over to RR 335 that would take us back to RR 337 where we returned to the Bent Rim Grill completing the 100-mile loop.



Ranch Road 335

The weather was perfect! Blue skies above with a few clouds. The temperature was 66 degrees! The landscape was beautiful! The green foliage in contrast against the tannish-white ground made for a surreal surrounding as we rode along!

We were definitely in the Texas Hill Country! RR 336 lead us through hills and canyons. The twisty road carved into the hills at times. When we cut over to RR 335, this sister was more up and down as compared to the other two sisters (roads). It

was a lot of fun! And there was little to no traffic all along the route!

It took us about 2 hours to complete the loop. Like the eclipse, I was impressed with the Three Sisters—more than I thought I would be! I'm so glad we included it into this Iron Butt challenge!



Texas Hill Country

Back at Leakey, I set the GPS for Baton Rouge, our original stopping point to end the ride. This routed us south to highway 90, then east into San Antonio.

Traffic thickened as we entered San Antonio and the temperature rose into the low 80's. A lot of construction going on too! Surprisingly, the thick traffic flowed well!

We jumped on I-10 and continued east. Once outside the metro area of San Antonio, traffic lightened up until we reached the outskirts of Houston. I had planned to take the outer loop around Houston, but traffic wasn't too bad. So, we just went right through the belly of the beast! Houston is huge! Traffic was typical thick city traffic, but like San Antonio it flowed well without any issues.

We continued on I-10 to Beaumont. By now, it was dark. We decided to stop at Chick-fil-a for dinner and a short break. We knew the worst of the traffic was behind us, or so we thought.

I tried to make a hotel reservation near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but the prices were crazy! \$350-\$450. LSU must have been playing at home! I looked for a hotel in Hammond which was about 40 miles farther east. Hotel prices there were much better! We had plenty of time, so the extra 40 miles were of no consequence.

We made great time once we got out of Beaumont! Traffic on I-10 thinned out. The temperatures went down along with the sun. Life was good until we were on I-12 when traffic came to a screeching halt— We were 20 miles from finishing our ride in Hammond!

It was 11:30 pm by now. Shortly after we stopped, we could see a helicopter circling above. Emergency vehicles used both shoulders to make their way past us to the accident. We waited!



Accident on I-12

Luckily, the weather was nice and so was the temperature. We continued to wait. After about an

hour, I was off the bike walking around. A guy in the car behind us said there were 13 people injured in the accident ahead of us. That was all he knew.

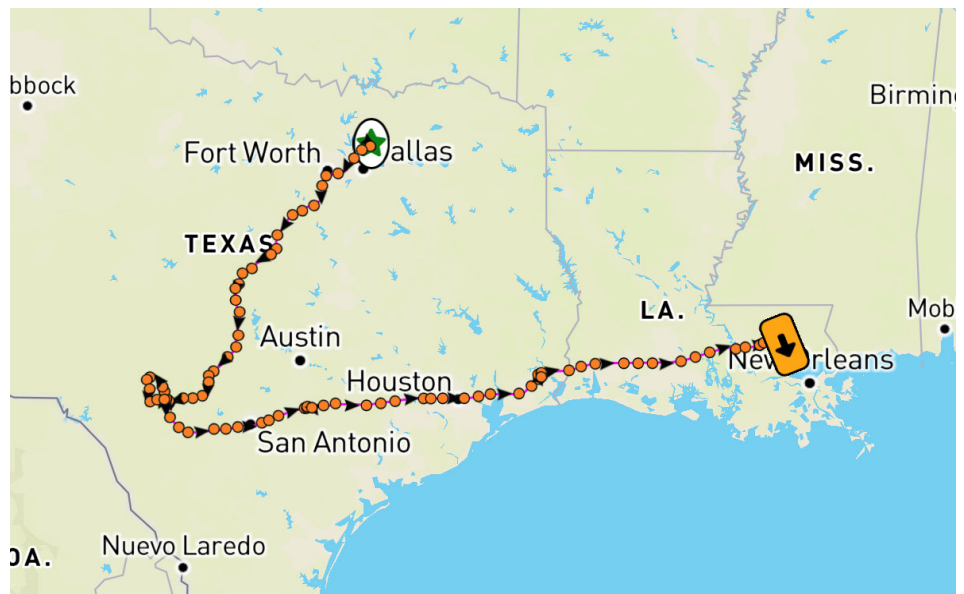
A little later, Karen and I were both off the bike stretching our legs. At 1:15 am, we could see traffic ahead of us start to move. We jumped back on the bike and finished our ride!

We stopped at a gas station in Hammond for our official end receipt. Time 1:36 am for a total of 1,079 miles in 21 hours, 29 minutes.

Considering that we stopped for an hour and 45 minutes to view the eclipse and eat lunch, stopped again in Beaumont to eat dinner, and yet again for another hour and 45 minutes due to the accident, we still had plenty of time to finish our 1,000-mile ride well within the 24-hour time-limit to include riding through three of the 10 largest cities in the USA: Dallas, San Antonio and Houston! The following morning, we rode 300 miles home.

These Iron Butt rides are not only fun challenges, but they also allow us to experience life-events together. Watching the eclipse in the maximum viewing path was a memory we will never forget! Riding the Three Twisted Sisters was a bonus that we truly enjoyed! Being out and enjoying nature is awesome! Even though we were stopped on the interstate for almost 2 hours, we counted our blessings to be fortunate enough to have had a safe wonderful ride!

2019 BMW R1250GSA
Distance: 1,079 miles
Time: 21 hrs, 29 min.
Average Speed: 47 mph
Fuel Used: 32.205 gal
Fuel Mileage: 33 mpg
High Temperature: 83°
Low Temperature: 53°



1,079 Mile Route from Allen, TX to Hammond, LA