



Jacksonville – Key West – Jacksonville 1,020 Miles

BUZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ!!! Thursday morning, I woke up to the alarm on my iPhone going off at 5:00 am! Good thing, I had my iPhone as my backup alarm since the hotel wake-up call never happened! I was in Jacksonville, Florida getting ready to participate in Iron Butt Association's (IBA) annual event in conjunction with Bike Week.

This year, the IBA offered three different rides: The Life's a Beach 1000, Life's a Beach 1500 and the Krazy Key West 1000. The Life's a Beach rides would take you over to Mexico Beach to witness the devastation caused by Hurricane Michael. Then, through the panhandle of Florida and back to Daytona Beach to catch a glimpse of Bike Week. The 1500 would also circle around the state going down to Naples and across to Miami before heading back to Jacksonville. The Krazy Key

West ride would take you down to Key West and back to Jacksonville. I had signed up for the Key West ride since I knew this would be a fun challenge especially during Bike Week/Spring Break!

After waking up, I jumped in the shower and did my morning routine. I was feeling pumped up for today's adventure! Breakfast would open at 6:00 am. I grabbed my paperwork and went downstairs to check-in for the ride.

At check-in, I handed in my AMA waiver form before being issued my ride flag. This numbered flag was an important part of the ride. It would be required in each of the three mandatory photos that I would be taking to validate my ride. My flag was number twenty-two. Now, on to breakfast.

At breakfast, I sit with a group of friends from Georgia. Four of the friends would be riding together in the Krazy Key West 1000, the other friend chose to ride the Life's a Beach 1000. We figured the Life's a Beach 1000 riders would more than likely beat us back from the Key West ride. We enjoyed a short morning visit prior to our rides.

The Riders Meeting would be held in front of the hotel entrance at 6:45 am. During the meeting, safety and any last minute information required for each of the rides would be briefed. The 1500 mile riders already had been released. Next up, the Krazy Key West briefing. Within minutes our meeting was over and we were released. Now, we are officially on the clock!

The three mandatory photos on the Key West ride consisted of a photo at Ron Jon's Surf Shop in Cocoa Beach, one at the Key West lighthouse and a third one at the southernmost buoy in Key West. You could take these photos in any order. My strategy was the same order as stated above. I would ride to Cocoa Beach first to get it out of the way. I assumed traffic would be lighter first thing in the morning. From there, I would go to the lighthouse and finally the southernmost buoy which was only a few blocks away from the lighthouse. Then, it would be a nice ride back to IBA Party Headquarters in Jacksonville where I would need a dated business receipt to officially clock off and end my ride.

Now, I'm ready to ride! I jump on the bike and set my GPS for Ron Jon's Surf Shop! We were sent all the

information for these rides a few weeks ago, so I had the waypoints already loaded in my GPS. Ah! It's only 154 miles away! This will be a nice short little ride to get my first mandatory photo.

It was dark as I pulled out of the hotel parking lot. The temperature was a little cool. Since it was a weekday, rush hour was going on in Jacksonville. But, it wasn't too bad. Within 20 miles or so, the traffic lightened up a little. Nothing to really slow me down. I enjoyed watching the sun rise this beautiful morning in Florida! My main concern was the traffic in Cocoa Beach. I was riding south on I-95 and turn off at the Cocoa Beach exit. State road 528 is a nice four-lane road that crosses over the Indian River then over to Cape Canaveral. As I cross over to the Cape, I see a giant Carnival cruise ship at port. Fortunately, there were no large crowds headed to board that baby!



Cocoa Beach

I ride on to Ron Jon's Surf Shop to get a picture of the outdoor display of surfboards and a post with mileage signs to various places. The Key West mileage sign and my ride flag were required to be in the photo. As I approach, there were several other riders getting their picture taken by

some tourists. I grab my flag and the tourists were happy to take a picture for me too! Ron Jon's was a huge surf shop open 24 hours a day! They had a very colorful display with surf boards on the north side of the building.

Picture taken, I'm outta here! I was glad to stop at this location first. The traffic was light, so I could get in and out of there pretty quick! I get back on the road, stop and fuel up, back over the Indian River and onto I-95 south! I ride about 120 miles on I-95 before I exit over to the Florida Turnpike.

I have three electronic passes on the bike: an EZpass, Texas Tollway Pass and the Florida Sun Pass. These passes allow me to ride on toll roads in many states. They make it very convenient! Keep in mind, even though they sell the electronic passes at convenience stores in Florida, it takes at least a day to get your account setup! My advice is to have one already setup when you arrive. You can order any of these electronic passes online.

The Florida Turnpike gets me away from the I-95 traffic along the coast. I take it all the way around Miami to Homestead. From there, I exit onto Card Sound Road to North Key Largo. At the riders meeting, they highly recommended this little detour to take you over by the Crocodile Lake National Refuge. This route was a much more scenic than just jumping onto Highway 1. As I arrive at North Key Largo, I see a group of four bikes that I recognize in front of me, my Georgia buddies! So, I fall in behind them and ride for a little while.

When I see we're about to approach Highway 1 (The Overseas Highway) on Key Largo, I pull over to a gas station for a short stop. There, I top off my fuel tank and make sure to drink a bottle of water, eat a couple of mozzarella sticks and use the restroom. I also open all the vents in my riding jacket, so the air will flow through. By now, the temperature was 85 degrees. I wanted to be as comfortable as possible just in case there are any traffic issues the remaining ninety-nine miles on the Overseas Highway to Key West.

The next thirty miles were congested, stop and go due to stoplights. Slow, but not bad. After that, even though there was a lot of traffic going out to Key West, it moved pretty well considering the 45 – 50 mph speed limits along the way. I was enjoying the beautiful turquoise water as I jumped from one Key to another over to Key West. One thing that really did catch my attention was a huge iguana hanging out in the grass beside the road! Wow! Is that an iguana, I asked myself? Next thing I see is four or five more iguanas crawling out of the shade and into the sunlight! Holy Cow! I've seen a lot of wildlife on the bike, but never an iguana!

The rest of the ride, I just kicked back and enjoyed the scenery. When I arrived at Key West, the traffic was thick! From cars to scooters, Key West was congested the entire time I was there. I slowly worked my way over to the south side of the Key, stopped in a small parking lot behind the lighthouse, clipped my flag to the windshield of the bike, got my photo

and headed off to the southernmost buoy a couple blocks away.



Key West Lighthouse

At the buoy, there was a long line of tourists waiting to get a selfie with the buoy. The line was at least half a block long and four people wide! I parked the bike and walked over to a family taking pictures some distance from the buoy. I asked if they would mind taking my picture. They agreed and were curious as to what I was up to. I told them, I was in the middle of a long distance ride, a thousand miles in twenty-four hours! Oh my! Isn't that dangerous on a motorcycle? No, why would it be dangerous? They just couldn't believe someone would attempt to do that. Well, I'm sure they saw several other riders doing the same thing I was doing. Some people run several marathons a year. That seems impossible to me! There are those who say it's impossible while others are doing it!

By now, it's 3:30 pm. I left Jacksonville eight and a half hours ago. I figure by the time I get back to Jacksonville it will be after midnight. I had planned to eat lunch in Key West, but after seeing the traffic and congestion, I thought I would just wait until I was in a less crowded area on one of the other Keys.

After leaving Key West, the traffic lightened up quite a bit. I rode for about an hour then stopped at King Seafood Restaurant on Marathon Key. I was wanting to try some conch fritters while I was in the Keys. I also ordered some steamed clams. This was an excellent choice! I sat and enjoyed my meal for about 30 – 45 minutes. This would be my only real break of the ride. During my normal gas stops, I don't mess around. Just fuel up and hit the restroom if necessary.



Southernmost Point in USA

Now, back in the saddle headed for the barn! The barn being Jacksonville, of course! The rest of the ride back through the Keys was great! Beautiful scenery, crossing over bridges that covered the beautiful light blue water. Watching boats, of all sizes, out in the ocean. It just doesn't get much better than this!

As I rode out of the Keys toward Homestead, the sun was setting. I

jumped back on the Florida Turnpike for 120 miles, then onto I-95 the rest of the ride back to Jacksonville. It was a great ride back at night, the temperatures remained very comfortable. Traffic was much lighter than what I rode in earlier that morning. I was so glad that I signed up for this ride! It was all I was hoping for and more!

Back at the hotel in Jacksonville, there is a gas station across the street open 24 hours. I stopped in there to fuel up and get my official end time on a dated business receipt. The receipt showed 00:57. That would be 12:57 am. Approximately 18 hours after leaving this morning at 7:00 am.

I'm not really tired now as much as I am hungry! Next to the hotel is a Steak n Shake open 24 hours! So, I stop in there for a burger and fries. Now, I'm ready for bed! I get to bed around 2:00 am. Then up at 7:00 am for breakfast! I need to check-in with the IBA between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Officials would view my pictures and receipt and confirm I completed the ride within the 24 hour time limit. Later that afternoon, the president of the IBA would present certificates to all the riders. That evening, there was a banquet with 300 other crazy long-distance riders.

The banquet was an evening of what's happening in the IBA, special recognition to IBA big dogs and several discussions of long-distance riding! It was another great time with great friends and great stories! I'm already looking forward to the next long-distance event!