

Tennessee 1000



Memphis - Bristol - Memphis 1,047 Miles in 17 hrs 12 min

A friend (Jim) at work said “I would like to try an Iron Butt ride. I think those type of rides would interest me. How about a ride to Bristol, TN and back?” That’s what got this ride started! With that in mind, I recommended an “In-State Saddle Sore 1000” Iron Butt ride.

The “In-State” Iron Butt series of rides require you to remain within the state during the duration of the ride, but if you do cross into another state, you are required to re-enter the state at the same point. Miles ridden in any other state are not counted toward this achievement. A note for later.

Our plan was to get this ride done before it got too hot, so we planned

it for Saturday, June 13. Luckily, the forecast was for a very pleasant low humid day. (A rare occurrence in the month of June here in the south!)

Since Jim was asking for my experience on this type of ride, I suggested a plan: 1) Start before sunrise to maximize our daylight hours. 2) Ride tank to tank to minimize stops. 3) At stops, we will do what is needed to do with minimal down time. 4) Stop for a photo op to remember the ride and 5) Eat one meal at a Waffle House (Typically, easy in and out with minimal time loss). If you need anything else to eat, I advise beef jerky/protein snacks carried in your pocket to eat along the way. If we follow the plan we could complete

the ride in a reasonable timeframe and it would not interfere with our Sunday plans.

There was a Love’s Truck Stop near our office that would work as our start and end location. From here to Bristol and back is 999 miles according to Google Maps. We would need to add some miles to this route to get well above 1,000 and have some cushion so there is no doubt that it would qualify for an Iron Butt ride. If we bypass Nashville (a pain point) by riding around it on I-840, that will add 37 miles to the route. Plus, if we eat at a Waffle house in Piney Flats, TN, that will add another 10 miles for a total of 1,047 miles.

In order to document this ride for the IBA (Iron Butt Association), we would be required to obtain the following receipts:

1. Love’s Truck Stop, Memphis
2. Marathon Station on I-840
3. Gas Station in Bristol
4. Waffle House in Piney Flats
5. Marathon Station on I-840
6. Love’s Truck Stop, Memphis

Any other gas stops would require receipts as well. This would document our route in accordance with the proper IBA protocol.

The intent was to set up expectations between both of us. Jim agreed. This plan worked great!

The day of the ride, we were to meet at Love’s at 5:00 am. Both of us

arrived early. This Truck Stop was busy at this time in the morning! Who knew? We fueled up the bikes, took the required photo of our receipt next to our odometer and headed out. My official start time was 4:52 am. Let's ride!

The ride around Memphis on I-240 wasn't too bad until I almost exited off on hwy 385! I was going through a mental checklist and suddenly realized I wasn't in the lane I needed to be in! Back on track and onto I-40.

Jim and I both knew there was some construction between Memphis and Jackson. Fortunately, this early in the morning there was no traffic and the construction crew was just starting to set out traffic cones. We had no problem at all as we rode on by the construction crew. Life is good!

In Jackson, there is some lane diverting due to construction, but no problem for us this time of day. We continue on!

Between Jackson and Nashville, we did run into a few sprinkles of rain. Where did this come from? It wasn't in the forecast! And, the temperatures dipped down to the low 60's just after sunrise. We both turned on the heated grips to take the morning chill off!

Once we are about to exit onto I-840, Jim rides up beside me. He gives me the OK symbol, then a zero, then repeated the hand signals.

Prior to the ride, we knew the distance between Love's and our

first required stop was 199 miles. Since the range on Jim's Harley Ultra is less than my BMW, we knew he would be the deciding factor on fuel stops. During the planning stages of this ride, Jim thought he would be able to make it to the Marathon station on I-840 near Thompson's Station.

Well, I thought Jim's hand signals were telling me that he is out of gas, the zero symbol. But, the OK symbol reassured me he was OK. So, I kept on riding knowing the Marathon station was in about 30 miles.

When we were 8 miles from the station, Jim rode up beside me, then in front of me and exited off I-840. At that exit, there were no sign of any gas stations. Jim told me he was about out of gas. Oh! I explained to him that I thought he was OK. He said that he was telling me he had three-zero miles of gas left, 30 miles! I ask "Can you make it another 8 miles? That's our next stop." He said "Maybe. But, we'd better slow down a little to conserve what little fuel I have left." I was thinking to myself. We don't need to run out of gas on our first leg! We make it to the Marathon station with no problem. We agree on simple hand signals. Thumbs up is good! Thumbs down is bad! We continue on!

As we ride around Nashville, we start seeing hills. Everything is bright green! We'll see the Tennessee hills the rest of the trip out to Bristol and back to Nashville. What a great day to be on the bike!

As we ride along, we do get into a little traffic going up a hill near Crossville. But, other than that, it was an uneventful ride to Bristol. Even Knoxville traffic wasn't too bad, a typical pain point the several times I've been through there.

Once in Bristol, we get a receipt and head to the sign that crosses over State Street. This sign shows VA is on one side of the street and TN is on the other with Bristol in large letters at the top. This is where I wanted to take a photo of our ride.

State Street's center line has bronze markers embedded in it to show that it divides TN from VA. Traffic flowing west to east are on the TN side of the street while traffic flowing east to west are on the VA side of the street.



State Markers/ Street Centerline

As we arrive at the Bristol sign, there is a train track between us and the sign. And, a train blocking the road! We need to go around the block and get on the other side of the train. To do this, we cross over into VA.

Since there was a train blocking the street, we parked the bikes in the

street on the TN side. While I was setting up the tripod, the train started to move! Imagine that! I was able to snap a couple of pictures before moving the bike over to a small lot off of the street. I wish I had thought about snapping a picture of Jim holding up traffic as the railroad crossing arms started to raise. But, Jim had the bike moved in no time! No holdup on the traffic!

From the empty lot, I snap a few more pictures and we get ready to head out. Now remember, if we exit the state we must return the same place we exited.

The train is now gone and the street we exited the state is only about 50 yards away on the other side of the train tracks. I explain the situation to Jim. He says "He'll follow me". I ride to the street do a U-turn and we're now compliant with the IBA In-State rules. We probably rode in VA at most a half mile.

Now, we are back on State Street heading east. Our next destination is the Waffle House in Piney Flats. The GPS wants us to do a U-turn. But, to stay compliant, I head south and let the GPS re-calculate. It does as expected and we're back on track. Life is good!

We arrive at the Waffle House and take a little break for lunch. Jim asks if Waffle House is a favorite of mine. Not really. It's just a convenient place to stop, service is relatively fast and we can sit down to eat.

By now it's 2:30 pm Eastern Time. Considering this is halfway on our route, we've covered 500 plus miles in 8 ½ hrs. We're pretty much on schedule. The sign fiasco took up more time than expected, but we still have plenty of time to complete this ride well within the 24 hr time requirement!

As we head back toward Memphis, the weather is great! Temperatures did rise up to 89 degrees, but the low humidity kept it very comfortable. Beautiful lush green hills and blue skies! This is why we ride!

We stop at the same Marathon Station near Thompson's Station off of I-840. I fuel my bike up and the pump is out of paper. No receipt and the station is closed! Luckily, I move to another pump and squeeze in 29 cents. Viola! A good receipt!

Jim reminded me that we need to stop again for gas before Memphis. He didn't want to press his luck like we did this morning.

A similar incident happens at the next gas station in Brownsville. The station is closed, but the pumps are working. Darn! No receipt for either one of us! We ride across the road to another station that is open, squeeze in a little more fuel. Again, good receipts!

Now, it's getting dark. We only have 56 miles to our end point, the Love's Truck Stop in Memphis. We make it there with no problems. Again, this place is busy! We gas up and get our final receipts. These

receipts are the official end time for each of our rides! My end time is 10:04 pm. Official time of 17 hrs, 12 minutes for 1,047 miles per Google Maps.

It's always great to witness a new Iron Butt rookie! Not many people will ride tank to tank for 1,000 miles. That is some serious riding! Most people that complete an Iron Butt ride only do one. Very few continue on to enjoy the other great rides and adventures the IBA has to offer. Only time will tell for Jim...



Jim Finishes with a Smile on His Face! A Good Sign!

Ride Stats

- **BMW R1250GSA**
- **Distance: 1,047 miles**
- **Time: 17 hrs, 12 min.**
- **Average Speed: 60 mph**
- **Fuel Used: 29.283 gal**
- **Fuel Mileage: 35 mpg**
- **Low Temperature: 62°**
- **High Temperature: 89°**