

# The Road to Why



**Highway 85 from Gila Bend, AZ to Why, AZ**

1,571 miles is a long way! Especially if you add another 20+ miles to avoid an accident along the way with the clock ticking!

This themed Iron Butt ride is named “Why? Why Not!!”. You are required to ride from Why, AZ to Whynot, MS or vice versa in 36 hrs. But, if you complete it under 24 hrs, it’s considered a “Gold” or “Insanity” ride! Of course, I will try for the gold and if something happens, I could always revert to the 36 hr time limit.

I’ve been wanting to accomplish this ride for several years and the opportunity finally presented itself. Plus, it was a great time to really get the feel of the new BMW and see if I had the bike set up properly for some hard, long distance riding!

I am entered in Butt Lite X later this year. This 6-day marathon scavenger hunt will really test my mettle, so I need all the seat time on the BMW that I can get. This ride to Why, AZ should provide me experience on the bike during some extreme conditions. Just what I need!

The weekend prior to this ride, Karen and I rode down on the Gold Wing to check out the area in Mississippi. Whynot is a small community 13 miles southeast of Meridian on highway 19. We found out the Whynot Grocery/Gas station closes from 9:00 pm to 5:30 am. But, there was a Shell station a few miles away that has gas pumps available 24/7 even though the station itself closes at 8:00 pm. This would be my start location!



**Whynot Grocery in Whynot, MS**

My plan was to ride down to Whynot, MS after work on a Tuesday. Check out the area and take some pictures, then get a hotel room for a few hours sleep. I would get up at 2:00 am, ride down to the the Shell station for a start receipt to begin the adventure.

Fortunately, I was able to lay down at 8:00 pm and fall asleep within minutes. I woke up at 2:00 am, jumped out of bed ready to ride!

I made it down to the Shell station, filled my gas tank, checked the receipt, zeroed my odometer settings and headed out!



**Shell Station near Whynot, MS**

1,500 miles in 24 hrs is known as a Bun Burner Gold (BBG) in Iron Butt lingo. It’s basically 24 hrs of solid riding! So, I planned the 2:40 am departure with that in mind. This

would allow me to get roughly half of my nighttime riding hours in first. I would rather do this than to ride twice as many hours in the dark at the end of my ride when I'm most fatigued. This strategy works for me!

Another part of my strategy was to get through the weather system early before the day heats up. Thunderstorms can really grow in size during a hot afternoon. And, in Texas, that can mean some large size hail may accompany it. Again, it worked perfect on this ride. I rode through some heavy rain most of the way across Mississippi, fog in Louisiana and some cool temperatures and rain halfway across Texas. By the time I rode through Dallas and west of Ft Worth, the temperatures jumped up quickly. But, the sky turned blue with no threat of thunderstorms at all! Life was good!

While riding through El Paso, the temperature peaked at 102 degrees! The sun started to set as I crossed into New Mexico. I also noticed, traffic seemed to die down. I'm not sure if this was due to the COVID19 scare and restrictions in New Mexico or if this was due to the sparsely populated area.

It didn't take long before I was in Arizona. I had been on interstate all day until Tucson. There, I got on a 4-lane divided highway which soon turned into a 2-lane country road (Hwy 86). The good thing is this road had very little traffic!

10 miles west of Tucson, an accident had the road closed. Police were directing traffic to turn north. I turned, thinking the GPS would automatically route around the accident. The GPS had me going 10 miles north. I was wondering why the GPS would not have me turn toward the west and go around the accident, but it didn't. I followed the GPS for 10 miles where it had me do a U-turn and ride back to where I came from! Once I returned to the accident scene, I noticed there were many cars parked around the area with people standing and sitting next to their cars. I was wondering what is going on?

This time I stopped and talked to the policeman directing traffic. I asked how I get around the accident and back on highway 86? He started to tell me, but I had earplugs in and music blaring in my headset. I could not hear a word he said! So, I asked him again, and again. After the 4<sup>th</sup> time, he got out his iPhone and showed me Google Maps. He showed me to go back ¼ mile, turn left on Valencia Road, then go to Sandario Road. Well, once I turned onto Valencia Road, it was a terrible road with a lot of desert sand and potholes. That turned into a one-lane desert sand trail! And, I was going against traffic! The sand trail was deep desert sand except for the two tire paths where it was packed down. There was scrub brush on both sides of this trail to make it narrow, barely wide enough for one vehicle. Get off of one of the two hard-packed paths the width of a car tire and you're in deep desert sand! And, it was dark! Real dark! With

oncoming traffic, I had to get off the hard-packed path several times. One time, I got over into the deep sand and knew the bike was going to get stuck! Fortunately, I made it out!

Now, I knew why those people were hanging out around their cars. They were waiting on the accident to clear. They were not going to go the route I had just been! You needed a 4-wheel drive or a dirt bike to get through there!

I finally made it to Sandario Road and back to highway 86 heading west. That road seemed like an interstate compared to the sand road I just came from! Time to ride!

Now, I was 120 miles from Why. It was about 9:30 pm and I felt good! It was a great ride the rest of the way! I could see scrub brush and tall cactus on both sides of the road as I continued along the dark highway. I love this! I try to imagine what it would look like during the day. I imagined some great landscape with desert plants. The next day would prove me right!



**Why Not Store in Why, AZ**

I finally made it to the Why Not Store in Why, AZ. This is the end



point to my ride. The store was closed, but the pumps were on. From past experience, I know not to fill up my fuel tank completely as the pump might be out of printer paper, so I only pump in a gallon. Darn! The pump says “See Clerk for Receipt”. So, I go to the next pump. Darn! Same thing “See Clerk for Receipt”. I do this one more time with the same result.

The instructions provided by the IBA state that if a receipt cannot be obtained take pictures to prove you were there. So, I take pictures on the pump stating “See Clerk for Receipt” and pictures of me and the bike in front of the Why Not Store. From there, my hotel is 55 miles away. I decide to stop at the first gas station I see to get a receipt to stop the clock officially as insurance of a successful ride. I find one within 10 miles in the town on Ajo. I fuel up and head toward the hotel in Gila Bend.

Along the way, I see a small jack rabbit and large one near the road. A little while later, I see a bobcat on the shoulder and watch him dart into the scrub brush. The night is clear with very little to almost no traffic on this 2-lane road. Life was good! I was wide awake and enjoying the ride!

I finally make it to the hotel where I check in. It’s 2:00 am. I am one tired puppy! A few hours later, I’m awake! It’s 7:00 am.

Today, I wanted to check out the area and take some pictures. First thing was to eat! I eat a nice

breakfast at the restaurant attached to the Best Western Space Age Lodge in Gila Bend, AZ. This place was 1950’s motel. But it was exactly what I needed! A place to stay with food next door!



**Best Western Space Age Lodge**

After breakfast, I head back down to the Why Not Store in Why. During daylight, the road was awesome! I had it to myself most of the 55 miles there. It reminded me of pictures that Neil Peart would take of a long lonely highway. So, I wanted to recreate this for myself. I stopped and parked the bike on the center stand in the middle of the road pointed toward Why. I named this picture, “The Road to Why”. It turned out great!

Once I made it to the Why Not Store, I asked the lady at the cash register if she could print my receipts from the night before. She could! She could print all 3 receipts! This would provide the end receipt that I needed! Official end time: 10:59 pm (Arizona time) or 12:59 Central time which would calculate to 22 hours, 19 minutes. This qualifies as a “Gold” or “Insanity” ride! My goal had been achieved! I had traveled more than halfway across the country and made good

time doing it! A memory that I will always cherish!



**Why, Arizona**

I spent the rest of the morning riding around the area taking pictures. By the time that I returned to the hotel at 11:00 am, it was 105 degrees! I was soaking wet in sweat! The forecast had temperatures rising to 109 degrees. My plan was to get some lunch, go back to the hotel before it got any hotter, fill out my ride log and then take a long nap. Goals accomplished!



**On the Road to Why**

The next day, my plan was to get up early and head home. I wanted ride north to I-40 to get out of the heat since the temperature forecast was going to be 113 degrees.

On the ride home, I wanted to qualify for an IBA Bun Burner

(1,500 mile) type ride. Since I wanted to eat, get some rest and back off the intensity a little bit, I knew the Bun Burner Gold (1500 in 24 hrs) was out of the question. But, maybe I could qualify for a Bun Burner Silver (1500 in 30 hrs) or just a Bun Burner (1500 in 36 hrs).

I was up and out of the motel by 4:00 am Arizona time. I watched the sunrise as I bypassed Phoenix. Heading north to Flagstaff, temperatures dipped down to 55 degrees in the higher elevations. I spotted an elk! Later that morning, I would see several mule deer cross the interstate. I love seeing wildlife!



**Sunrise near Phoenix**

In Flagstaff, I stopped for breakfast at a Cracker Barrel around 7:00 am. Then, I hopped on I-40 headed east!

I did see temperatures rise to 93 degrees later in the day in New Mexico and Texas. As I rode through Arizona and New Mexico, I enjoyed viewing the western landscape. The mountains and plateaus in different shades of brown were highlighted by the green shrubs and other colored plants.

In Amarillo, TX, I stopped for dinner around 5:00 pm at the Big Texan Steakhouse. Karen and I have stopped here several times on various motorcycle trips.



**Amarillo, Texas**

Even though this trip was during the COVID19 crisis, most places were open for business, but seating was limited to every other table to comply with social distancing guidelines. I never had a problem finding a gas station open or getting something to eat.

After 1,000 miles that day, I stopped in Oklahoma City for a few hours of sleep. I woke up around 3:00 am. I tossed and turned for a few minutes, then decided to jump up and get back on the road.

I watched the sunrise as I crossed over into Arkansas. The temperatures were a little cool, but extremely comfortable! Life was good!

I finally pull into Hernando, MS and stop at the local Shell station for an end receipt. Official end time was 11:04 am Central time for a total of 1,559 miles in 28 hours and 58 minutes (including 2 meals and some sleep). This would qualify as a Bun Burner Silver!

This trip was awesome!! I always love it when a plan comes together. My strategy for my body clock, fatigue management and the lingering storm system worked out well. These are all part of the challenges that make each IBA ride so special. Sometimes you win, but you never lose as long as you return home safe and sound!

### **Why? Why Not!! Ride Stats**

Distance: 1,594 miles

Time: 22 hrs, 19 min.

Average Speed: 71 mph

Fuel Used: 50.363 gal

Fuel Mileage: 31 mpg

Low Temperature: 61°

High Temperature: 102°

