

Out on the road...

Dave's Key West Trip

Well that wasn't a good start to the day. In the IHOP restaurant I asked for the seniors 55+ breakfast and the waitress didn't ask if I was old enough!

The trip was supposed to be me and my sidekick Kevin, but he suffered two heart attacks before Christmas (he's OK) and as you just never know what the future holds, I went on my own.

I picked the Heritage up in 6 Bends HD, (so called after a set of handlebars) in Fort Myers Florida.

I packed the Harley, signed the paperwork and set off in mild but foggy weather. As the traffic was horrendous on Route 41 I decided to use back roads to Everglades City. Going down SR82 and then onto SR29, the roads were nearly empty. The sign warning road users that Panthers crossing for the next 7 miles made me feel a bit vulnerable-but I didn't see any. The fog had cleared and the heat built up by the time I reached Everglades City.

I turned left onto Route 41 the Tamami Trail through the Everglades, and headed for my next stop the Miccosukee Indian Village. I was last there 28 years ago and couldn't be bothered this time with Gator wrestling. Looking at the sky in the direction I was headed-time to suit up in rain gear! Five minutes down the road I was in the storm, 5 miles later out of it. The Tamiami Trail has 4 bends (well more like slight deviations from straight) over the 60 miles from Everglades City to the outskirts of Miami, and is a slice of old Florida

Road and bridge building was going on everywhere so it was slow going south on route 997 to my hotel in Florida City-Gateway to the Keys.

Next day I headed south on US1 and within 1 mile I was out of the city traffic and heading for Key Largo. After key Largo there is a key called;-The Key with No Name.....

The trip down was very slow with many 45mph sections with a maximum of 60mph in places, but at those speeds you can take in the scenery. The 7 mile bridge is amazing with the Atlantic one side and the Turquoise blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico on the other.

From Long Key there was debris laying on the sides of the road from Hurricane Irma, boats smashed up and one standing on its bow leaning against a palm tree. It looked like an image from Beirut!

Upon reaching Key West I followed Route1 to the end/beginning, and had some photos taken by some HOG members from New Jersey. I then turned round and headed for the southern most point of the USA for another photo kindly taken by a French guy. Duval St and Mallory Sq are where it all happens here, bars, music and Petersons Harley Davidson store of course. I got collared by a girl to try a free sample of a cream to reduce lines, wrinkles and bags under the eyes, she did around my left eye and I couldn't tell the difference, so I got outta there. Looking into Millionaires Gallery I spotted a 1950 Panhead Harley, so had a chat with a fella called Sky who worked there and he told me it was the owners who had found it in a barn with 20,000 miles on it.

Once I checked into the hotel I did a bit of lounging around by the pool and Jacuzzi, then rode down to Duval St again to find somewhere to eat. Ah ha a Denny's old school diner, so I picked a steak skewer off the 55+ menu and again I wasn't asked if I was



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old enough! (I should have bought that cream) What sides did I want with it the waitress said-fries and onion rings please-it came with 15 onion rings! Are onion rings good for over 55's?

Next morning after breakfast I started the ride back to Miami, gassed up (\$8-the Harley was doing about 55 to the gallon) and 5 miles down the road it started raining. Hard. Pulled into another gas station to put on my leggings and within 5 minutes the forecourt was flooded. My Harley Davidson waterproof Roadway fleece worked well on both occasions it rained. Off I went and a few miles up the road, bone dry so off with the leggings again!

I had been stuck behind a truck for ages and not able to see ahead, so when a bit of dually appeared in the 45mph limit I opened the throttle and flew past the truck and there, lo and behold on the roadside was a cop car! I went down to 45mph and stayed there and a few miles later he pulled up alongside of me and then sped off again. I stayed where I was and a couple of miles later he was parked on the side of the road again. Cop cars are everywhere, and in the Keys there are even old cop cars placed strategically to slow traffic down. A different take on sleeping policemen!

One of the many bridges that links the Keys was up, with a massive queue, and as you are not allowed to filter, I turned round and went back 3 miles to a bra shop that was advertising 44DD and upwards to see if they had any customers having a fitting-nope I was the only one!

Back on the road and the traffic had cleared and soon I was back at my hotel in Florida City. Dropped my HD touring bag off at the hotel and went and had a look round K&G Cycles, a fairly new accessories shop, with a nice 1937 Knucklehead and a 1965 Panhead Electraglide on display.

Out in the rain again and I rode a few blocks up to a Sally Army Thrift store and bought a Ralph Lauren towel for a \$1.74 to wipe the seat dry. Bargain!

Next day I had to return the Harley to Ft. Myers, so rather than do Interstate 75, I took a long route north up the 997 to route 27 to Lake Okeechobee. Skirted round the south of the lake, and met up with a brother and sister from Florida City who were headed to Sebring "just for a ride." That would be about a 350 mile round trip then...

Rode with them till they turned north, and carried on west. Found a lovely "Mom and Pop" cafe in LaBelle, had a look round a fleamarket, and a church yard sale, then off again for the last 30 miles of the trip back to 6 Bends HD.

The bike was via Eaglerider, hotels Booking.com, Flight Virgin Atlantic, the route google and a good old map, the fun, Harley Davidson.

Even riding an HD in the USA, ordinary folks say "nice bike" and when they hear my accent, come over to chat, have no idea where in the UK I live, so 120 miles North of London is usually ok.

The 2017 Heritage of course handled it with ease, and compared with my 2001 Heritage, it felt like it actually had brakes, had better handling and more power. Just doesn't look so good! The only downside was the seat, which when it got wet, the rain seeped through the stitching at the back and upon sitting on it for a few miles, my nether regions were damp. I hoped I hadn't wet myself,

