



FLORIDA GATOR TALE

Honda Sport Touring Association

February 2007



Adriatic River Tour

Submitted By: Phil Ridgill

The Florida GATOR TALE is doing very well. Now we have all of our members contributing these tales of adventure on their motorcycle. I'm reading about Paulie and his travels, very well done, impressive. I haven't traveled in Scandinavia yet but I'm interested. My Son-in-law happens to be Swedish, maybe one of these days, as Andy says " So Many Roads So little Time ".

We've just returned from an SMT Tour of Slovenia and Croatia. I guess it was about a year ago that I started talking about another overseas tour and finally got it together with five HSTA couples, Don & Dianne Horne, Dave & Dianna Boland, Ron & Joan Walkenspaw, John Hunt and Mary Crawford and Carmel & I. We also met up with 4 other guys who joined us in Dubrovnik. The Tour is called the Adriatic Riviera Tour and I can tell you the Adriatic Coast is absolutely stunning. To begin ,Carmel & I took an overnight stop in Frankfurt, have to rest up for a day. The following morning we met up with Ron & Joan in the Frankfurt Terminal and after a short wait boarded Adria Airways on our way to Skofja Loka Slovenia.

SMT had a driver waiting for us and took us to our Hotel in Ljubljana. Davie & Dianna had arrived the day before, so they gave us a little tour around Ljubljana. Very interesting city, shops everywhere, nice café's, people friendly, old style European city.



The HSTA in Dubrovnik Croatia, Davie Boland, Dianna Boland and Carmel Ridgill inside the old walled city

The next day Don & Dianne and John & Mary arrived. Matej & Martina, SMT owners, arrived at the Hotel and off we went in the Van & Car to pick up the bikes and back out to the Mini Hotel in Skofja Loka, nice small Hotel. More about Skofja Loka later on, very interesting little village with lots of history. On our first day, we had a bit of rain but it really wasn't a problem. Every body was well equipped for the rain so it was just a normal day. We used a bit of Motorway to get around Ljubljana, once we were

15-20 kilometers out of LJU we took to the back roads. Motorway was excellent, back roads became interesting, they were good roads for riding, no traffic. I opted for a BMW 1200GS, which in my opinion is an excellent machine, scenery was

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And the Award Winning Florida HSTA Site at: www.flahsta.org

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Ads and National Ride schedule will be back next issue - when we expect to have a little more room!

Welcome to the Club!

We would like to extend a hearty and sincere welcome to the following recent new members. Thank you for choosing to join our group. Many long lasting friendships have begun here and we hope your experience will be a satisfying one!

Name	Location	Ride	Introduced By
Doug Westly	Valrico	'06 VFR	Fanny Haine
Becky DeShazo-Westly	Valrico	'06 VFR	Fanny Haine
David Sumner	Lakeland	'04 Gold Wing + others	Bob Shields



Southern European Trip - Part 2 of 2

Submitted By: Fanny Haine

Thanks to the French Gold Wing Forum, similar to our Yahoo Group, I had been in contact with several riders before going on my trip. So when I arrived to the campground it was like meeting old friends. I received a warm reception. That evening like all the following evenings, we dragged all the tables and chairs to make one big table, food appeared from everywhere accompanied by all kinds of bottles of wine. The beauty of having a Gold Wing, trailer and so on, is it allows riders to bring lots of food and wine from the region where they live. And of course the fun is to share all that with your friends. In that week, I was able to sample cheese, wine, some strong liquor and other goodies from the entire country. After all that, singing came along and just plain clean fun. The weather was so nice, we sat there until midnight under the stars chatting

put my big purse inside my Rocket jacket which made me look like I was 9 months pregnant. Here I am now driving through the very busy town following the Gold Wing friend on my way to the fortress. I got a lot of funny stares, that is all I would say, especially that at the beginning I kept stalling the engine because I did not give it enough gas. The driver behind me must have thought I did not know how to ride! But I was laughing so hard with the other guy, that I was crying. The fortress of Carcassonne is one of the nicer ones to see. It has 30 plus towers of all sizes, a well-preserved wall that goes around the city about 2 miles around. All the streets within the city are pretty with lots of souvenir shops, cafes and restaurants. I spent the whole day walking around and seeing everything, then it was time to get back on my small bike and hopefully find my way back to the dealer. I congratulated the dealer who



and just enjoying each other's company. Sunday we did a long nice ride in the region and I could not take in enough of the scenery as we were riding curvy hills allowing me to see all those colorful flashy Gold Wings riding smoothly among the numerous vineyards. I just felt so full of happiness, I thought I was going to burst. Next day I helped the group to prepare for the rally, which was going to take place in a few days by folding hundreds of T-shirts and preparing the registration packets. But that was more fun than work and of course we were thanked by again a wonderful evening with more food and wine at the campground.

My good bike did need some care after all those miles. One guy called a dealer to set an appointment and another guy led me to the place which was at Carcassonne, about 40 miles away. At the dealer they had arranged to give me another bike to go around and visit Carcassonne. I ended up with a Honda CB600. I did not think about taking a backpack (spoiled with the Gold Wing), so I had to

successfully removed all the Spanish bugs permanently encrusted in the Gold Wing.

Thursday was the first day for the rally, and riders started to show up all day long. What a sight! They came from every European country. As a matter of fact, the guy who got the long distance trophy came from north Norway. The rally had more than 1,000 registered bikes, pretty good considering there are not as many Gold Wings as in the U.S. Until Sunday when it all ended, I had a wonderful time. To my surprise, at the closing ceremony, I received a trophy for being the rider coming from the farthest place, a category they made up at the last minute as flying over the ocean cannot be counted as mileage ridden. Anyway, I was impressed with the feeling of togetherness. It did not matter where the rider came from and what language was spoken.

The following week the riders left the campground little by little and



Adriatic River Tour

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rural, breath taking in some places, small villages, nice twisty roads where you can exercise the GS a bit, not all that fast just a good rhythm.

Our destination that first day was Plitvicka, this is where the Plitvice Lakes Croatian National Park is located. After we arrived and got settled with our baggage, in the van and off to the National Park. This park is huge with all these different size lakes and waterfalls everywhere. I think it was 16 lakes and the water was the most beautiful blue colour. We walked for quite some time, exercise was good, I needed it. The best was yet to come, dinner was in the park, a Traditional Croatian meal cooked over an open fire, it was bloody good.

The following day we set off for Dubrovnik, very interesting roads. We stopped at a neat little village for a bit of mid morning tea/ coffee and here was this big open pit with the fire going and across the bar was a large pig being roasted. Before we left, they put a lamb up over the fire also, somebody, wasn't us, had a great lunch there. We had a bit of rain, on and off, it never took anything away from the ride. When we reached the Dalmatia Coast, clear and no rain, what a sight. As the rider it's a bit difficult to take it all in, I'm sure Carmel had a better view, but from what I could see it was great. I thought the ride on in to Dubrovnik was outstanding.

Dubrovnik, as you all know is a very fascinating, charming, historical city. We had a free day here so naturally everyone had their own

agenda. We toured the Old City with Dave & Dianna, met up with Don & Dianne for lunch and in the afternoon Carmel & I walked the wall around the old city. People still live & work inside the old walled in City, very fascinating place, little alleys & bars/café' everywhere. We were told about this Bar/Café that was built into the outside of the wall overlooking the Sea. We finally found it after wandering around for awhile, very neat bar, the view was beautiful. Dubrovnik, it's everything they say, History, Beautiful, Exciting, it will get your attention.

After our free day in Dubrovnik, it's on to Hvar Island. Our destination is Hvar but first we must catch the ferry at Drvenik. This means we backtrack up the Dalmatia coast, which was fine with me, if I lived here I would ride this coast everyday. We stopped in Bosnia, which has about 10k territory along the coast, for Petrol. Main reason, Petrol is a lot cheaper in Bosnia. At this point I traded Bikes with John, GS for John, Carmel & I hopped on the BMW1200ST. The 1200GS and the 1200ST are both fine bikes. The 1200ST is BMWs Honda VFR. It's not going to have the performance of a VFR, it's close but no trophy. It's a bloody good Bike that's comfortable and it's all the power anyone needs. On a good flowing road this motorcycle will motor away from a GS. I rode this bike up to Drvenik, 2up, very nice machine. Ok, back to the main story. Shortly after buying Petrol in Bosnia, we rode through an area of orchards and small farms, fruit stands on the side, looked very good to me. Found out later how good the fruit is. The ride along the coast is

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Southern European Trip - Part 2 of 2

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eventually I was the only rider left. It was a little bit sad and lonely. So I just kept riding to different places, the region of Languedoc-Roussillon is so nice with so much to see, it does not matter which direction you go, it is always worthwhile. I also did a lot of hiking through the vineyards. The local riders did not forget about me and invited me a few times to other get togethers and rides.

My next move was back to Spain at Llanca situated just on the other side of the French border by the coast. The Spanish GW had their rally in the area, so I rode to Llanca with several French riders. There, I stayed with some cousins from Belgium for two weeks. I did not do a lot of riding but got to visit the whole area in the comfort of a car.

Then I rode back to France to the Cote d'Azur area. I was staying in a family inn in the woods, very peaceful and only 5 miles away from the beach. I rode along the coast to Nice, visited St. Tropez where I saw lots of luxury yachts. Same thing, so much to see, so many nice rides to take. Unfortunately, as I was at the end of my two weeks stay and getting ready to ride to Italy, I was robbed at night while I was sleeping. The thieves came by my open window and took everything out of the room. I am still surprised but thankful that I did not hear anything. The saddest consequence of the theft

is the loss of 400 pictures stored in my camera. Most of my belongings were recovered in the parking lot of the hotel. But without money and credit cards I had to change my plans and go back to Belgium where I had ways to get myself together again. Adrenaline was running high when I left that place at noon on my way to Belgium. It is about 625 miles, which I rode in 10 hours because I did not want to stop anywhere else. Fortunately at one of the gas stops I met a rider with a VFR who was going to Paris (a long way too). We decided to ride together and that helped to calm me down.

Let me give you some advice in case you do get robbed to facilitate your recovery. You need to have all info, like phone numbers of banks, phone company, insurance, friends, and so on... plus copies of passport, driver license, registration, credit cards and other documents, not in one set but in at least 3 sets. I had all that info in a small agenda book and in my cell phone. Phone was gone, agenda book had been looked at (opened on the bed), but thank God, not taken. If I had lost the agenda book, I would have lost all my contacts. So now I will have all my info in at least 3 different locations. I recommend a PIN number for the cell phone. A PIN number was required to use my phone and thanks to that, I did not lose any credit. I also have invested in a small movement detec-

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just beautiful, the water has a deep blue colour and it was very calm, almost like glass. From Drvenik it's a short ferry ride to Hvar Island. After the ferry ride, at the first village, Sucuraj, we made a stop for shopping, food for lunch. John was ready to have the ST back. Matej had a little spot on the water that he had in mind for us to have our lunch. Little did we know that the ride down to this spot would be, shall we say a bit curvy, I thought it was great.. Tight and not much room for error but it was worth it. Gorgeous little Bay, nice little bar close by and just perfect for us. After lunch, back up to the main road and on to Hvar City. Our Hotel was just a fantastic location, 4 Star Hotel on a small bay, dining outside under the trees in the evening, food excellent, lovely place, everyone on the tour enjoyed this Hotel. Luckily, another free day here. I enjoyed a morning in the sun and a nice swim in the Adriatic. It's like swimming in a Florida spring, so clear and clean you can see

everything. After lunch Carmel & I met Mary and decided it was time to take walk into Hvar Town and see the sights. Beautiful Town, lot of History, quiet little alleys with unique shops, neat Café's, service very good. It's a small port town, very busy Harbor with Yachts of all sizes, fishing boats and activity all over the place. The whole group met in the Town square, wandered around a bit, up an alley and climbed a few stairs to this neat restaurant on top of the building. Very nice evening.

Next day when we leave the Hotel, Matej takes us on this narrow road to the top of the mountain where we could see across the Havarski Kanal to Brac Island. The visibility here is unlimited (CAFB or CAVU), if I had to guess I would say it was 35-40 miles, maybe even more. Hvar Island is well known for its Lavender Fields and when we stopped for a view the Lavender was growing wild.

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tion alarm that I can put on the nightstand.

After two weeks in Belgium, I was ready again to travel with money, new credit card and new phone, but I did not get another camera. Now on my way to Italy, I rode through Germany and Austria. It was always a pleasure to stop when I had ridden enough and find a beautiful cozy Guesthaus to spend the night in some small town. Nice to walk a little and always something nice to see and good places to eat. At Schio, Italy I stayed with the Gold Wing family I met at Narbonne. I had ordered a kind of homemade trunk that attached to the Gold Wing. While he was working at doing that, I went to visit Venice. It was so hot, I felt more like swimming around Venice than walking. I do not need to tell you it is a place worth visiting. It was packed with tourists which made the whole experience more interesting. After a couple of days of being treated like a queen by my new friends, it was time to head back to Germany and spend some time with long time friends.

I did stop on the way in a nice small German town called Wasserburg situated in a river loop. I liked it so much I stayed there several days. Wonderful opportunities to go hiking. They also happen to have a special wine fest in which of course I participated. I just love in my travels when I stop somewhere at random and there is a special event going on, it is like a special gift. Lots of people in that area were bicycle riders, and I saw some interesting equipages like that family: the father had a tandem with his oldest girl riding at the back, the small son was riding a small bike hooked to his tandem and behind the son's bike there was a small trailer. The mother was pulling a baby carriage behind her bike. That beats the Gold Wing equipage! Weather was still fantastic and I ate breakfast outside, ice cream for lunch, and dinner at the terrace drinking a big nice tasty German beer. Is that life or what?

So in August, I finally arrived at Grafenwoehr, Germany located about 60 miles east from Nurnberg. I still have many friends there because I was stationed with the US Army there for about 8 years.

Most of them are Harley Davidson riders. For the first time in my trip, it started raining heavily and did so the entire month. However that did not preclude us to ride to Berlin to visit some friends (some German riders who came to Florida we met a couple years ago). The trip was to go to a Harley Rally way up in north Germany. Fortunately, the weather there was a little drier. I was excited about that trip because we were going to one of the very few areas I do not know so well in Germany. I had the opportunity to visit Berlin again and see all the changes since the wall fell down. Then on the way to the rally, we rode all day on some nice roads among villages decorated with flowers all over. The hotel was by the water. As we stayed several days we had plenty of opportunity to visit in detail the whole area as our "leader" was born in that region. I have to tell you also that he is 100% Harley. Everything in his business, a restaurant, is Harley, the decorations, the colors, and the customers. We did ride a full day under a thin non-stop rain, but I enjoyed myself so much in their company, I just did not care.

Here comes the day to come to the small rally. I want you to imagine the big flashy yellow Gold Wing even longer now by a foot with the trunk attached to it, coming into the Harley parking lot, passing in front of all the bystanders and all the big mostly black Harleys. Then imagine the riders with their long hair and long beards in their black leather suits coming to a halt as they see me passing by. I did not know if I should hide or stay proud. Well, I choose to stay proud and with assertiveness, I gracefully handled the bike between people and bikes until I came to a stop. I was not off the bike before a crowd was around me. All the people were not hostile at all but very curious and wanted to know all the technical data about the bike. We took a parade run and there was no problem about me riding with them. As we stopped at the center of a small town for lunch, more people came around the GW to look at it. It was kind of funny. Again I had a great time all day, weather was nice, and I talked to lots of people. It was nice to be among members of the Harley family. When we arrived back to the hotel that evening, I could feel that by now the 100% Harley guy was inter-

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Some of the ladies picked a bit and it really has a nice smell. Coming down off this mountain was a cool ride. At that point we joined the line waiting for the Ferry to Split. The crossing to Split on the Ferry was outstanding, about an hour thirty, air was fresh and cool, there again the VSBY is unlimited, all the sail/motor boat activity going on was quite a sight. Passing through the gap between Solta and Brac Island was interesting. Split is a large city, arriving in the Port you could see that it was a busy place. One good thing about being on a motorcycle over here, people respect motorcyclists and you get some priorities. Such as, first on the Ferry and first off the Ferry, this helps. The only thing we did in Split was to stop for Petrol and get out of there. It was up the coast to Trogir before we got clear of traffic and from that point on it was a neat ride to Pag, our destination. At some point we stopped along the coast had a bit of lunch and Matej explained to us the history of the area and what had happened in this Area in the past, all of it very interesting. Particularly so since it was explained to us by Matej. The ride on to Pag Island and our Hotel, just another one of those beautiful rides. Our Hotel on Pag Island was another winner, gorgeous small Hotel and Winery with their own vineyard. Dinner that evening was outside on the terrace, food was outstanding, service was excellent, and the wine was from the Hotel's vineyard. I'm not a connoisseur of wines but the wine served here is fantastic. We got up early the next morning, had a walk up the hill and the view was quite nice, cool and fresh morning. Both of us really enjoyed this place. After a delicious breakfast, back on the bikes and a short ride to the ferry.

This ferry crossing was quick, only a few minutes and we were back on the mainland. The ride continued along the coast almost up Rijeka where we left the coast and started inland on the way back to Skofja Loka. Roads were great, had a little detour in the mountains before we crossed the border back into Slovenia but that was a cool ride. Crossing into Slovenia we stopped at this café overlooking this nice sweeping corner and quite enjoyable watching all the motorcycles fly by, the sounds were terrific. The ride on into Skofja Loka very interesting, nice corners, scenery was just beautiful. Carmel & I spent an extra day in Skofja Loka. This village is very Historic and interesting. We walked around the village and the people are so polite and friendly. We asked about a restaurant for dinner and a small café about 15 minutes walk was recommended. When we got there, 3 Sport Bikes parked outside, very nice bikes. The restaurant had outside or inside dining with a bar, inside please, I was in the mood for a real good drink. Of course it was quite obvious that we were not Slovenians and a young guy at the bar decided to practice his English with us. He told us a bit about Skofja Loka and it turns out the owner of the restaurant was big into motorcycles. The Barmaid ordered dinner for us, excellent food, very pleasant evening. I really like Slovenia, people are friendly and there is a difference between Croatia and Slovenia. I'm sure we will go back again but I think we will tour Slovenia.

Ride Safe & Smart

Phil Ridgill

Upcoming Rides/Events

Ride/Events are compiled for your convenience from a variety of sources. HSTA sponsored rides are indicated with the "♦" symbol. If you are considering making any of the rides we suggest you call the contact ahead of time to confirm the ride is still on as listed.

♦ **HSTA Florida North Lunch Ride - Feb 17th, 2007 - Floyd's Diner, High Springs, FL.** Lunch at 11:45 AM. Located on Rt 41 just north of the light at the intersection with Rt. 27. GPS from the map is: N29 50.134 W82 35.992. We haven't been here since the first Spring Fling and if the weather is good we'll eat outside. Contact: Sam Ulbing n4uau@cox.net or 352-262-6221

Future North Rides/Dates:

Mar 10 - Akins BBQ, Bell FL (Scott Wingerter) Apr 14th - Outback Crab Shack, Green Cove Springs, FL (Buck DeShazo)
May 12th - Salt Creek Seafood, Suwannee, FL (Sam Ulbing) June ?? - Picnic Lunch at some State Park (Bob Fischer)

♦ **HSTA Florida South Lunch Ride - Feb 24th, 2007 - Flora & Ella's, LaBelle, FL.** Lunch at 11:30 AM. It's been a while since we were here and they do have good accommodations for our size group! The GPS coordinates are N26 45.686 W81 26.843. Contact: Bill Royal RideFL@flahsta.org or 813-633-8155

Future South Rides/Dates: Mar 24th - TBD Apr 1st - Peck's Old Port Cove, Ozello, FL Apr 7th - TBD May 19th - TBD

♦ **HSTA Florida Daytona Bike Week Lunch Ride - Thurs. Mar 8th - Blackwater Inn, Astor Park FL.** Lunch at 1200 noon. Blackwater Inn is located on US 40 about 35-40 minutes ride west of Ormond Beach. We run this ride so that out of state HSTA visitors to Bike Week can get an opportunity to hook up with our local membership and maybe even get in a nice ride along the way. Reasonable prices, Salad Bar or Menu available. If you need further information contact: Phil Ridgill - 904-287-9654 or rfoxdr@bellsouth.net

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Upcoming Rides/Events

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◆ **3rd Annual Spring Fling Weekend** - April 20-22, 2007 - **Quality Inn, Thomasville, GA**. We've opened this ride up by invitation to the BMWNEF and the COG groups so there could be a pretty good crowd. Please be sure to book early!
For more details go to: <http://members.cox.net/n4uau/HSTA/RealFlorida07.htm>
Contact: Bill Royal at RideFL@flahsta.org or Jim Park at jimpark53@adelphia.net

Florida News

Submitted By: Bill Royal & Sam Ulbing

Wow! - What else can I say about our state's riders and their trips. I had so much content, I didn't use several pictures, and I STILL had to omit the ads and national ride schedules to make room for 6 pages! I do expect BOTH items to be back next month and both are still available on the FLAUSTA Website

In spite of the rain cancelled New Year's day ride - which I understand 5 brave souls still showed up to - we still held 3 lunch rides for the month of January - What a way to kick off 2007!

Bill's ride was the first on the 13th to the Cherry Pocket. The weather was stunningly perfect, and it drew 42 attendees (missing tying the record for a regular monthly lunch ride by just 1 person!) - unfortunately the restaurant wasn't up to the challenge and lunch turned into a 2 hour affair with some folks leaving without ever getting their lunches. I wasn't at all happy about the situation and let the management know about it. IF we ever go back there they've promised to make it right. We'll see... It's too bad because the food and prices are very good, they just didn't have adequate staff and supervision. The West Palm Crowd had 11 riders with 200+ miles to get to the lunch and longest ride honors went to Richard Kihnley who rode 245 from Deerfield Beach for his lunch

(and I believe he actually go to eat it too!)

Next up was Sam's ride on the 20th to Gator Joe's in Ocklawaha. This one drew 26 attendees in spite of the cold (for Florida) morning. Bill's Tampa group had 5 riders in it in the 130 to 150 range, but it was Larry Fitch who rode solo from Melbourne to capture LD honors with 153 miles.

Last, but by NO means least was the "bonus" South Lunch Ride on the 27th sponsored by "The Girls of Tampa" (Eve Blazsur & Fanny Haine). This one drew another healthy crowd of 28 attendees to a lunch at the Broadway Café in the tiny town of Ft. Meade. The food and service and prices were ALL excellent so we'll be going here again! Once again the West Palm crew had top mileage with 4 riders at 150 miles and LD honors going to P. Van Steelant with 175 on his Hayabusa

Don't forget to make your plans to attend the 3rd annual Spring Fling! For more details see: <http://members.cox.net/n4uau/HSTA/RealFlorida07.htm>

Until Then - Ride safe - Sam & Bill

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ested in the Gold Wing. So in the parking lot I asked him if he wanted to ride the Gold Wing. He said yes right away, telling me he will just go around the block. I told him no, go and give it some gas. He took off for a while and all of us were waiting for his return. His friends told me they never saw him riding anything else but a Harley. When he came back he said the bike was fantastic, the power and handling was so nice. His wife then asked of she could ride as a passenger. I said sure go for a ride. By then at the hotel all the friends got their camera to take his picture when he came back because they were was so amazed to see him riding the bike. They were gone for a while and we wondered if they were coming back! But of course they did. When the wife got off the bike, she told me this is like riding in a limousine. During dinner she was trying to convince her husband he should get a Gold Wing!

Back to Grafenwoehr, I spent the rest of my stay with my friend Linda riding in her car to escape the nasty weather. Sadly, I even-

tually had to go and went to Heidelberg to finalize the details of the bike shipping. I had hoped to sell the bike in Europe but because of the strict, lengthy and expensive requirements of customs, it is an impossible task. I love Heidelberg too as I was also stationed there for 8 years. I stayed a few days then rode back to Belgium. I had hoped to ride to Croatia but did not want to go alone and could not find anyone able or willing to go. I felt fulfilled in my riding adventure. Therefore, I decided to change my return date and come back sooner. I saw some extremes like at Luxembourg paying \$1.50 to use the restrooms at the train station, but in Germany a quart size bottle of water sells for 19 cents with a deposit of 30 cents for the bottle itself! Those details are what make traveling worthwhile to me.

After six months I enjoyed every day of my trip either by myself or in the company of others. I realized again how fortunate I am and we are to be part of a worldwide motorcycle family in which acceptance is the norm. Bikers, I love you all. Fanny Haine