

Motorcyclopedia (MCP) 2025 Ride Report

Left at 8:15 Friday. Nice ride up, one or two very light short rain showers. Bikes all did well. The cabin is great! But first we decided to eat in Ellenville which has a short, very intense strip with numerous eateries and especially bars. Hey, it's Friday night. The day was long at 300 miles and hot hot hot at 90+ degrees with excruciating humidity. We chose a non-airconditioned dive bar/restaurant, but it was all OK. We had discussed buying groceries and making our dinner, but no one felt like that. So, we got to the cabin after dark and it was like 66° in there. Massive air conditioning! There was a bed for everyone, except Eric who got a comfortable couch. There would have been room for the seventh person who cancelled late. It was an Airbnb. We were elated that there was a dozen eggs in the fridge but then let down big time when the renter texted and said: "Have some coffee and condiments but the food is our private stash: hands off". So, it wasn't really an Airbnb, just an Airb.

Saturday we had choices: visit the Woodstock Festival Museum, MCP or both! First things first, we took a joyful back roads ride to Wurtsboro where we ate outdoors at a Mexican breakfast restaurant. There was also an old school Harley dealer—O'Toole's HD: a small shop manned by real riders—that I had been to before. Some years ago they stayed late on a Saturday to replace a drive belt on a bike that was in a group I was riding with (not a RetroTour). The weather was splendid early on, and the roads were quite special as well. After breakfast, we made our way about 30 miles to Newburg and the MCP Museum was even better than I remembered. We also met the proprietor: Mr. Duering. Some of the bikes were quite outlandish from the Big Daddy Roth era. Others were simply fascinating. We hooked up with an 80 something 4 foot 10 inch female docent named Marilyn who told us that she rode The Wall of Death regularly starting from 8 years old. Wow! Serious cred. The museum has 2 Walls of Death, one a static display and the other loaded up in a custom tractor trailer, ready to visit the circus or fairgrounds.

After several hours it was time for lunch, so we headed down to the River Hudson and had a great meal on the deck at the waterfront at Billy Joe's Steak House. Then back towards the cabin and a bit beyond, to check out a promising overlook spot that we had passed in the dark the night before. The view was truly outstanding. A big loud Harley with ape hangers rode by and I waved with both hands enthusiastically. Got a head nod. Then 5 minutes later John turned his rigid framed HD around and dropped in on us. We had a great conversation; I love connecting with strangers like that. His son also rides, and John has a BMW 1000 four cylinder sport bike at home; quite a contrast to his old school chopper. A real RIDER!

Back at the cabin we made departure plans: 6:30 AM would give us time to deal with issues and still get home at a reasonable hour but the first issue occurred before we even left. A very feeble minded rider could not find the ignition key for the GS550 that he was riding. I searched all my pockets, and everyone looked behind and under everything. We tore the place apart but found nothing. Finally, with help from Fred and Richard and Eric, we managed to hot wire the bike and got kickstands up about ½ hour later than expected. We then rode through Bethel where a big sign said: "THE WOODSTOCK WAY". Next time we really should visit the Woodstock Festival Museum. We passed several inviting looking lakes, but it was not so hot this day and there was a lot of fog and mist around.

After 75 miles we stopped at the NY/PA state line for breakfast. In the restaurant, Fred said to me: "The 400F is leaking badly, as in drip, drip, drip." I thought he was just over-reacting to a minor oil leak but when I stepped outside to check it out there was a puddle the size of 2 --8x11 sheets of paper and it was still dripping from the left side of the motor. I put the bike on the center stand and got it aligned with the camber so as to lean slightly away from the leaky side. I tried the 4 screws that hold the countershaft cover on but damned Phillips heads! I could only loosen 2 with a screw driver. I went back inside to think on it and to eat something which always helps me think. Then I had a second run at it, using a flat blade screwdriver and my little brass hammer to knock the other three loose. Turns out the shift shaft oil seal had pushed all the way out! I pushed it back in and made 4 wee stakes in the outer aluminum wall of the case to help stake it in place. With help from everyone, we cleaned up the mess, checked the oil level which was still right at the top—maybe it had been overfilled a bit which helped push the seal out. We also disconnected the breather hose from the engine in case it was pinched or clogged and went on our way.

Next, we crossed the aqueduct over the Delaware river. I always thought it odd that a water bridge—part of a canal system-- would be built to cross a river. Why not just cross the river? Anyway, the roads in PA were so fantastic...too bad we got rain on and off for several hours. We got wet, then we got dry. No rain suits until later, when the rain got steadier. Finally, we got some blue sky and decided we needed an ice cream to celebrate. As we finished the treat, big dark clouds moved in and we shoved off quickly to stay ahead of the weather. The roads stayed wet most of the day which took some of the fun out of the very curvy route. It did, however, build character and challenge us physically.

At a gas stop, I was looking for some old fashioned blade fuses---we had popped one while hot wiring and used up the only spare. I had put the blown fuse in my pants pocket for comparative shopping, and when I stuck my hand in there, I found the key to the GS550. I started laughing out loud uncontrollably, which got a few odd stares. What the &^%\$#?! I hate getting old...my brain is not what it once was that's for sure. Not that it was ever anything special; Daddy always said I had a strong back and a weak mind.

We continued on, some in rain gear, some content to get wet. The sun came out finally as we neared Reading, PA, not too far from home. As we took a 10 mile run on the highway to bypass the city, the sky opened up and hit us with a biblical deluge. We slowed to 30, keeping to the right because we could barely see. Some cars were going just as slowly. Others passed us, roosting us liberally with warm rain water. There were no bridges to duck under, no pull offs, and no exits until we took the first available exit and parked on a side road near a building with a sheltering overhang. We were all quite thoroughly soaked by now and then.....the sun came out in full force. Of course!

A short while later we were back at RetroTours Central where adult beverages and tasty hors d'oeuvres were waiting for us. This was followed by Salmon Wellington, with various salads and more food than any of us could possibly finish.

Oh, there were 2 separations. The first when I ignored a detour sign (as is my habit: I find that bikes can often squeeze through, and I enjoy feeling like I got away with something) at a Fleetwood, PA construction zone. I rolled right through-- it was nothing more than 30 yards of hard packed dirt-- with

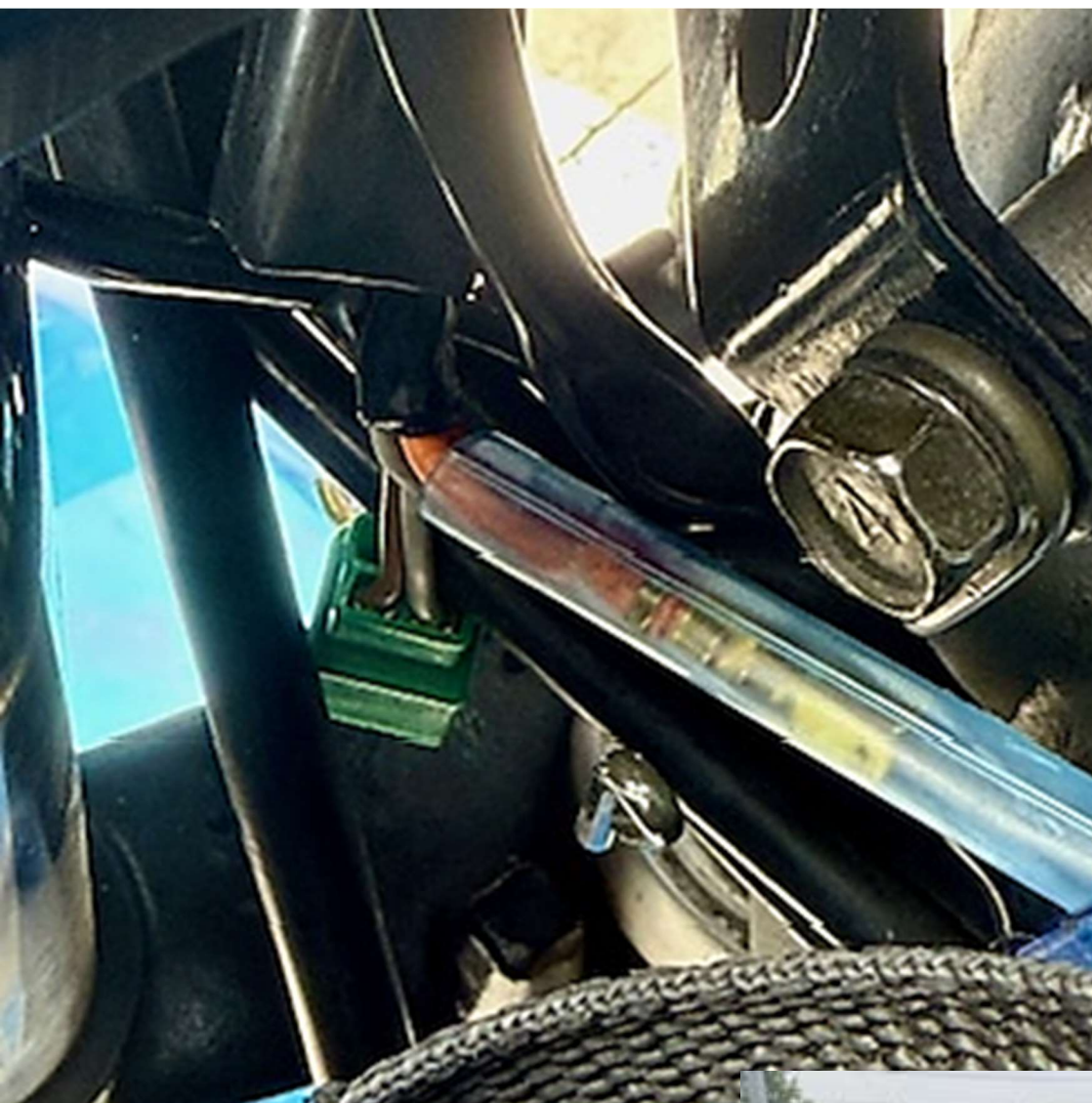
Richard right behind me. I thought I might have heard a shout, and when we regained the asphalt, there was no one behind Richard. A very large and angry construction worker had positioned himself in front of the other riders and refused to allow them to pass. I think he may have needed a cup of coffee or something. At any rate, Fred became the de facto 'Group B' leader and navigated through a long, unmarked (of course) detour route to finally regain the main road, but nowhere near Richard and I. We used cell phones to regroup at Yellow House, PA. The second fracturing of our group of 6 happened at a 'Y' junction where two riders, lagging a bit behind, went left while the rest of us had gone straight. Again, using our cell phones, we managed to regroup, but only after standing in the sweltering sun for 25 minutes.

Despite the rain, the 'lost' key, the separations, and all, I do believe that everyone had a fantastic weekend. I know I am ready to do it again...how about you?

We break for ice cream, with rain clouds brewing



Mark, Eric, Rory, Fred, Joel, Richard



This is how we hot-wired the GS550. It got us all the way home with no problems, except one blown fuse.

Convincing the oil to stay on the inside of the CB400F and cleaning oil from the rear tire. OK.... that's a little scary.



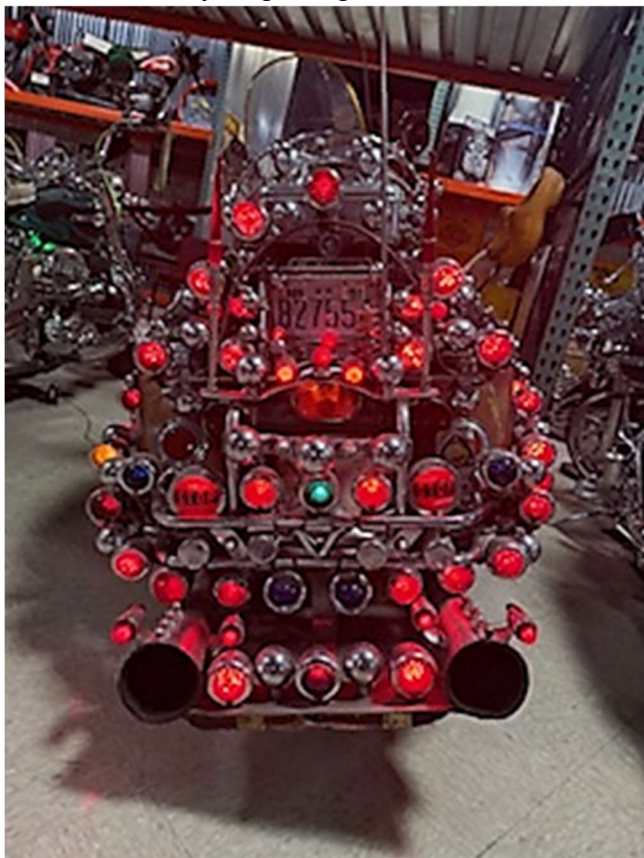


At a Catskill overlook



John and his rigid HD

Anyone got a light?



A Ducati sport bike, cut completely in half lengthwise. Why?



Oh, How the mighty have fallen. We pulled into what used to be Orange County Choppers, now a very large rent-a-storage-space facility.

A very pleasant lunch overlooking the Hudson River





*An air conditioned gourmet meal at the end of a long hard ride with great friends.
Life is sooo good!*