

RIDE REPORT KINZUA September 13-16, 2024. 4 Perfect weather days! 725 miles, 300 on the last day.

This ride has become one of my favorites. The roads and surrounding countryside are simply awesome. The destinations are cool too. Then too, having 4 perfect days of weather certainly doesn't hurt a bit; it's hard not to love it when the weather totally cooperates. Sure, the third day is long, a real challenge on old bikes on back roads: 300 miles+, but this group is totally up to it and as a reward the last day is short at 75 miles.

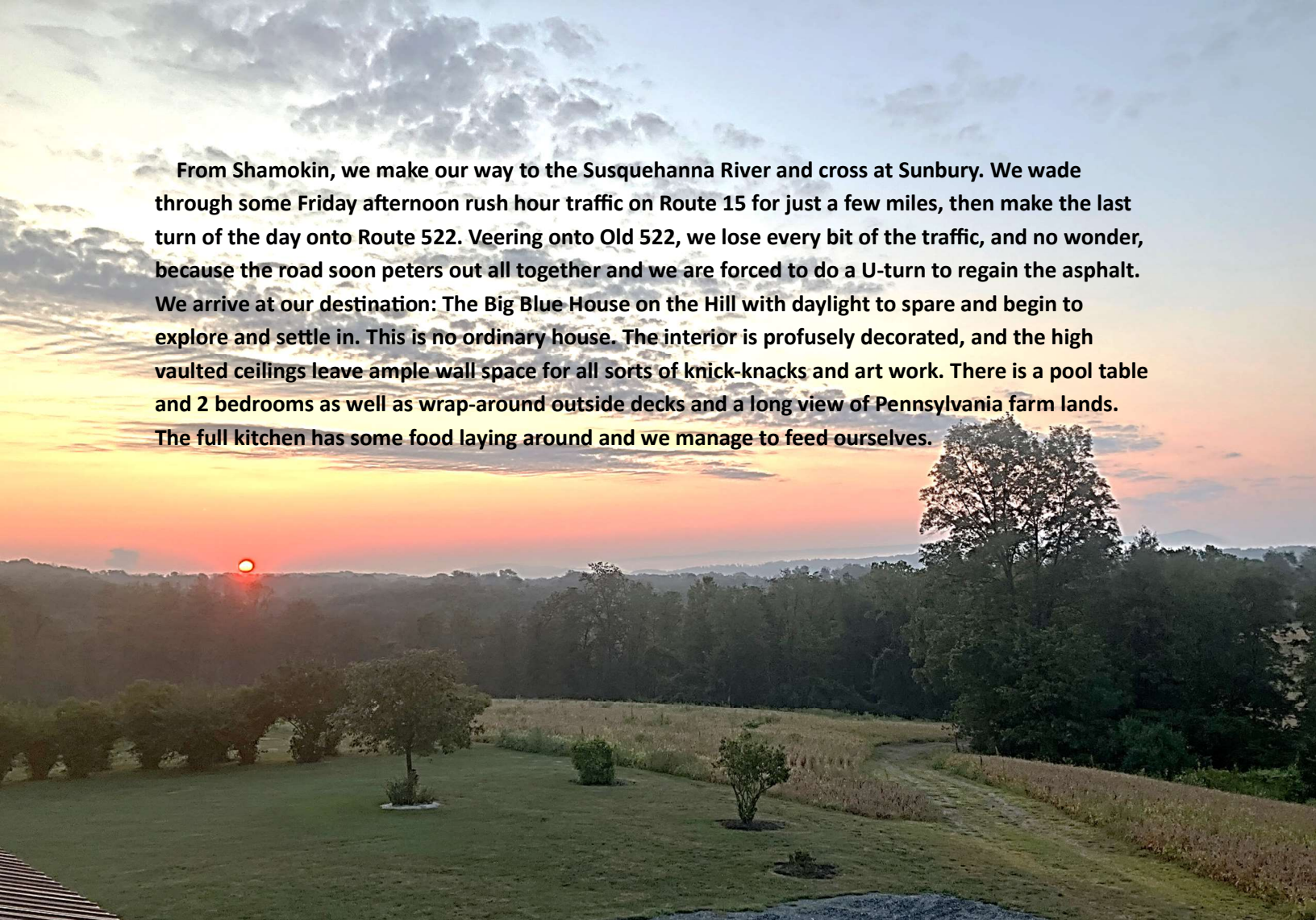
Jen and Jerry (like Ben and Jerry the ice cream) hail from my old stomping grounds: Eastern Massachusetts, where there ahh no ahhhs spoken. They drove down the night befoah and stayed ovah in the granny flat: what you may call a muthah-in-law suite. They ahh a hahd riding, fun loving couple that made arr weekend all the moah fun. Fred is a local rider who repairs antique cars at The Last Chance Garage; a great guy to have around when things go a bit south. And he has been around a lot, racking up over 20 RetroTours in recent years: it can be addicting; ask me how I know. We tried to get him into a rehab program, but first he has to want to quit, and shows no signs. Fred rolled in Friday morning to join us for breakfast and we loaded the bikes in a leisurely manner for a relaxed mid-morning departure.

From the house, we first circle the 5-mile-long block which includes a long straightaway, two or three stop signs, and a stretch of S-curves. This lets everyone adjust to the bike they are on. The first segment includes a lovely one lane country road through aptly named Green Valley, then follows the West Branch of Brandywine Creek. Here, the road is caving into the creek in spots, and a downed tree and broken bridge force us to dead reckon for a bit, using a closed road after skirting the concrete barriers, to regain Mortonville Road which brings us into Coatesville where we pass the rotting remains of a massive steel works, visible in the valley to our left. To our right are primitive, still occupied row homes where the steel workers once lived. Route 340 West is often shared with Amish folk in horse drawn buggies, and it brings us out of Coatesville and across the Octorara Trail, then past farm houses on Buena Vista Road (ci, la Vista es muy Buena) with simple clothes hanging out to dry on long clothes lines, a signature of Amish farm life. At Route 897 we turn north and follow this open, lightly trafficked road through Schafferstown to a lunch stop at more or less 100 miles, in Myerstown: the restaurant formerly known as Kum Esse, Pennsylvania Dutch for "come and eat" which we do.

Bellies full, we pick up route 443 which takes us across the Appalachian Trail near the 3500 acre Swatara State Park and on into Pine Grove. We transfer to delightful Route 125 which passes through a forested gap of Second Mountain and crosses Swatara Creek, then runs through more forest, paralleling the creek and passes through Echo Valley to cross Sharp Mountain. Ultimately the road curves northeast to ascend Broad Mountain before turning to the northwest to descend. The road heads through more farmland with some woods and homes before heading back into forest and turning northwest to ascend again, this time on Mahantango Mountain. What goes up must come down, in this case by means of torturous curves and numerous hairpins: truly a rider's delight! But wait there's more: we still need to go up and down over Line Mountain. To top it all off we ride on into Shamokin, where a Dunkin Donuts gives us a chance to decompress, caffeinate, and swap bikes again. Which bikes you ask?

Fred started the day on the R60/5, I on the GL1000. Jerry began on the CB400F, Jen rode the 1976 Moto Guzzi 850T3. Every 75 miles or so we stop for gas and switch bikes. This keeps things more comfortable by virtue of alternate pressure points, seating positions, and vibration characteristics. Of course, when we all leave the gas station on strange bikes, there is some weaving and wobbling going on.

From Shamokin, we make our way to the Susquehanna River and cross at Sunbury. We wade through some Friday afternoon rush hour traffic on Route 15 for just a few miles, then make the last turn of the day onto Route 522. Veering onto Old 522, we lose every bit of the traffic, and no wonder, because the road soon peters out all together and we are forced to do a U-turn to regain the asphalt. We arrive at our destination: The Big Blue House on the Hill with daylight to spare and begin to explore and settle in. This is no ordinary house. The interior is profusely decorated, and the high vaulted ceilings leave ample wall space for all sorts of knick-knacks and art work. There is a pool table and 2 bedrooms as well as wrap-around outside decks and a long view of Pennsylvania farm lands. The full kitchen has some food laying around and we manage to feed ourselves.



ABOVE:
*Sunset view
from Big
Blue.*

RIGHT: *Fred
and Jen
relax.*

BELOW:
*Important
bathroom
message.*



Wash your hands & say your *Prayers*
because *Jesus*
& germs are everywhere.

Day two provides more perfect weather. In the welcomed, delightful coolness of the early morning we head out and continue north and west, eventually crossing the Susquehanna at the Jay Street Bridge in Lock Haven, where we stop for a break and encounter a surprise. People scuba dive in the river from this very spot. Surprisingly, the water is very clear and warm, and there is a wreck dating back to the 1800's, lots of fish, and sunken artifacts from the lumber industry of days past. Who knew? In fact, we happen across an instructor and his teen age student about to complete an open water check out dive.



AT THE JAY STREET BRIDGE IN LOCK HAVEN, PA: (LEFT TO RIGHT) Fred, Jerry, and Jen

Continuing on, we enjoy wide open smooth mountain roads all the way to Haneysville, where we are just on time for lunch at Mountain Top Provisions, always a treat. Then we meander up Route 44 just 7 or 8 more miles to the Hyner Road turn-off which brings us up to Hyner View State Park, where we park for 20 minutes to stretch our eyes and

MAYBE STEAL A KISS.



DIVE INSTRUCTOR WITH HIS STUDENT



Passing through Renovo, we gain access to Route 144 which brings us straight north through massive state forest lands to Cherry Springs State Park, well known for its lack of light pollution, and hence a popular nighttime destination for star gazers. It's not much further to Route 6, a famous scenic ride for motorcyclists that traverses the state east to west. Today we are continuing westward just until reaching Coudersport, where we have reservations at the biker friendly Westgate Inn. After cleaning up and resting a bit, we meet in the lobby for a nice walk into this delightful town which has a vintage movie theater, and Eliot Ness Museum, a restored house that must belong to the Munster Family, and of great interest to all of us at this point, a Chinese restaurant. We walk and talk, explore and eat. Another very pleasant day in the bag. We all look forward to tomorrow's ride.





IT'S EEKY AND IT'AS OOKEY. IT'S REALLY KIND OF SPOOKIE.

Day three is “The Big One”. We start with coffee and cakes in the motel lobby, then ride 35 miles to The Kinzua Railroad Trestle, nestled in the mountains of western PA, arriving just as the state run facility opens for the day. Built in 1882, this half mile-long 300 foot high viaduct was considered the 8th wonder of the world, and it stayed in service until 2003 when a rogue tornado took it down. It is a fascinating destination in a beautiful countryside crisscrossed by curvy roads that will make any rider grin ear-to-ear.

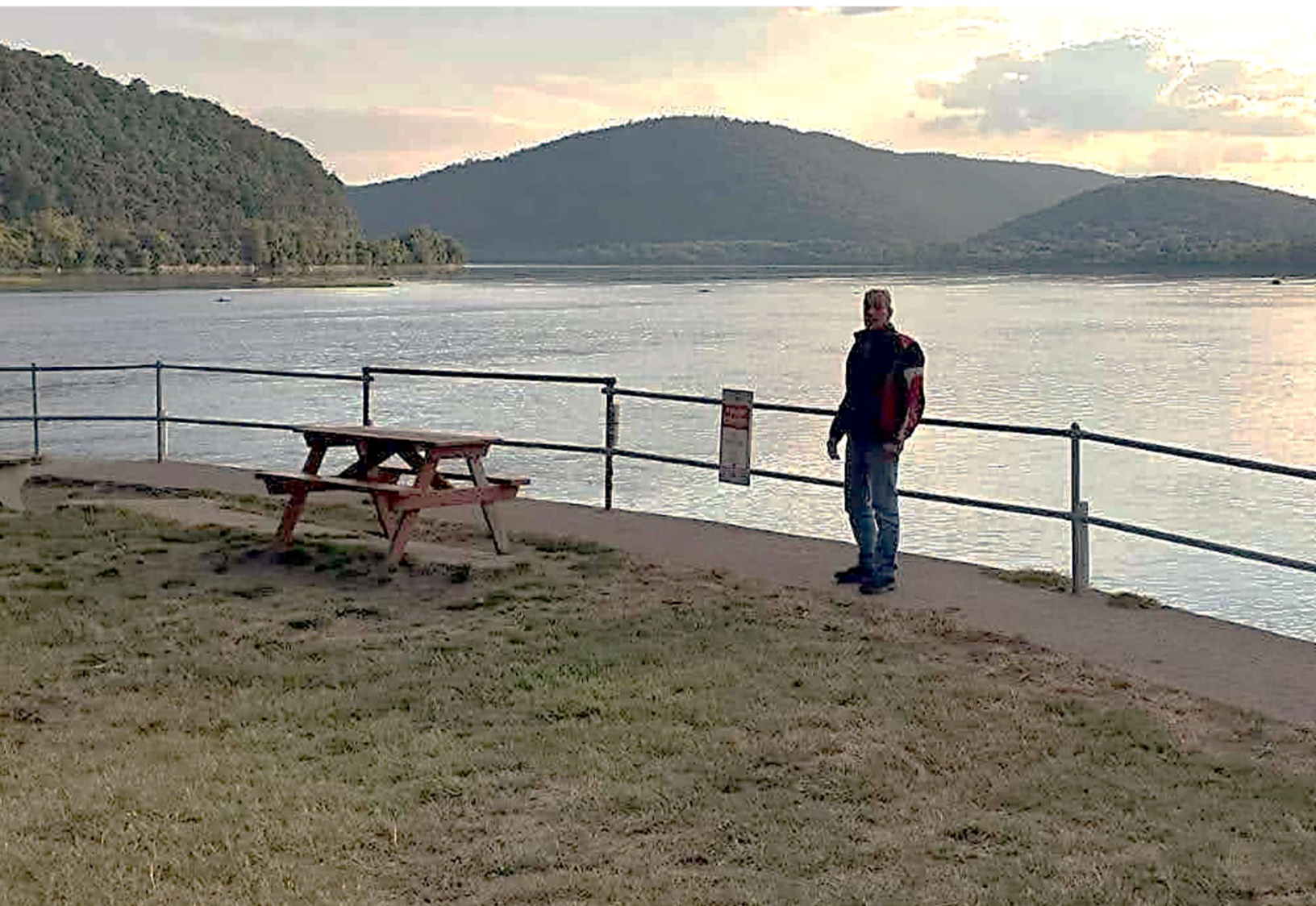


After an hour long visit, we take to the mountain roads once more, and in another 30 or 40 miles, we reach Emporium, where we have planned

breakfast. At a gas stop, we notice that the CB400F has grown very loud and is running a bit off-song. It is not difficult to see why: a 3-finger hole has blown open in the exhaust, just aft of the collector. Fred and I manage to cut up a couple of empty soda cans and we buy some hose clamps in the gas station. Before long we have fashioned a repair that should get us home, still several hundred miles away. Time for breakfast! As they say: “Eat to Ride...Ride to Eat”.



From Emporium we follow the West Branch of the Susquehanna River for 35 miles. The road features sweeping 50 mph curves and “A River Runs Through It” view all the way to the former resort town of Renovo, now a town of just 1,000 that we passed through yesterday from the east. This time we approach from the west, and after refueling, pick up 144 South which has ZERO traffic, and cuts through the massive Sprout State Forest which is larger than some states. We rode the northern leg of this road yesterday, and today’s run takes us up to 2500 feet in elevation on the way to Bellefonte, the seat of Centre County and home to numerous opulent Victorian mansions. Next, we enjoy following the small-ish Juniata River and Tuscarora Creek as the rivers and the road twist and turn in a southeasterly run all the way to The Main Branch of the Susquehanna River where we stop for a much needed break.



FRED, WHERE TWO RIVERS MERGE, NORTH OF HARRISBURG, PA

A few miles on highway 322 takes us to Fishing Creek. From here, it’s an easy 25-mile run to the back door of Hershey, where we have reservations at the basic, inexpensive White Rose motel. It’s a short walk to a nearby Indian restaurant for dinner, which is much needed, and the perfect way to end the day.



Monday AM finds us asking about breakfast places at the motel desk and we take the advice



to ride a short distance to a decent breakfast café just down the road, then ride behind Hershey Park to the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum. Three stories of old bikes, cars, and buses amuse us for an hour or more at which point we find ourselves in the sunny, rapidly warming parking lot, ready to complete the final leg of our 4-day odyssey.



1953 Horex

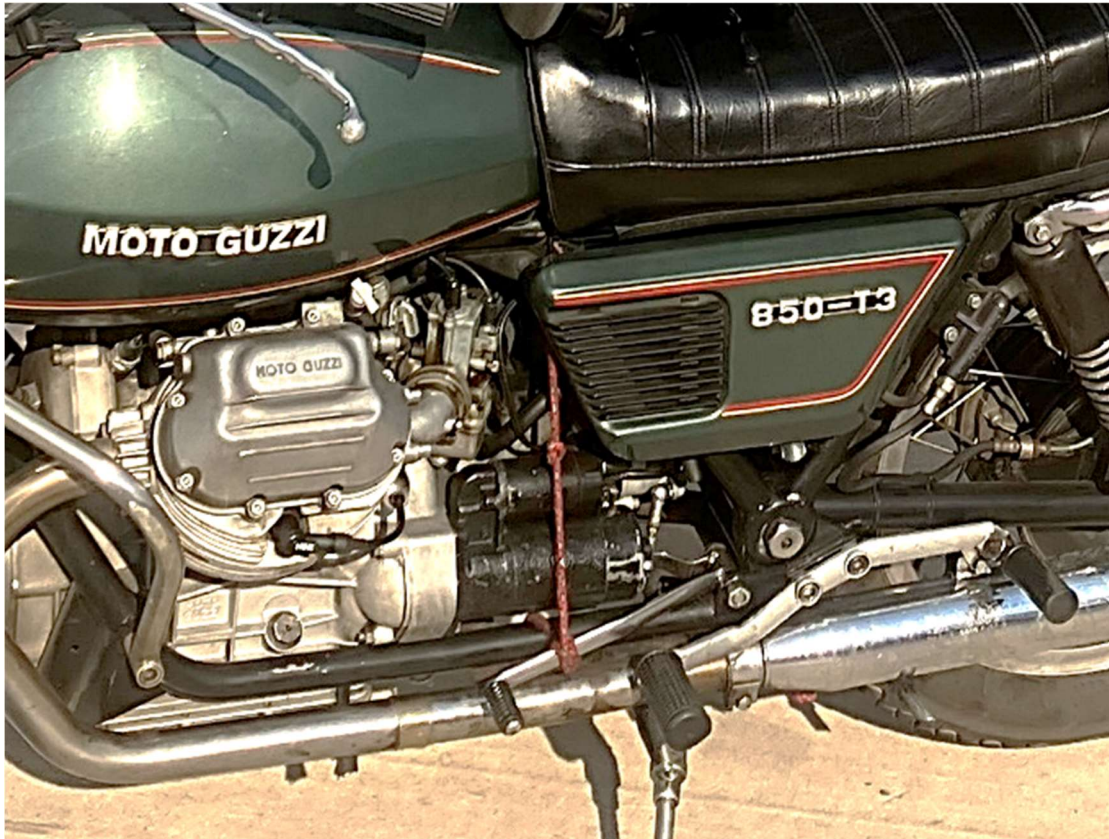
Manufacturer: Horex Motorenbau AG
Model: Regina with optional sidecar

Horex manufactured motorcycle engines, from Oberkochen. Horex and Columbus Corporation developed a range of Columbus Engines from 250cc to 500cc.

World War II interrupted production. It resumed in 1948 with a 350cc engine. In 1951, a 500cc twin engine called the *Imperator* was introduced. The company replaced the *Imperator* with the *Resident*.

This motorcycle was located in the collection of an Antique Automobile Award.

While the 75 mile ride home may have potentially been anti-climactic, it is nonetheless punctuated by a mechanical glitch. When I transfer to the Moto Guzzi 850 at a gas stop, I immediately notice that the shifting mechanism is not working as it should. The pedal does not self-center normally after each shift, so the ratchet mechanism does not re-arm. It is necessary to tap the shifter in the opposite direction before every consecutive shift. It is still possible to ride it, but somewhat awkward. We put our heads together and come up with an (ingenious???) solution. If the internal shifter return string is broken, why not add an EXTERNAL "spring"? A bungee cord is pressed into service and this improves things greatly, allowing normal shifting 90% of the time.



Eventually, in the shop at home, the transmission is pulled and opened up and the remnants of the broken spring are extracted. Then a new, updated and improved spring is installed. It turns out this is a common failure on this model. The pieces of the hardened spring steel spring could have caused major damage to gears, but we lucked out, and the \$4 spring was all that was needed, save for a few gaskets and seals.

We arrive back at Kennett Square early in the afternoon, unload the bikes, re-pack our bags, rest a bit, then sit down to a really nice gourmet meal compliments of my beloved wife Lynn. We are basking in the glow of our adventure. It has been 4 perfect-weather days of great riding and even better camaraderie. Earth is truly a great planet, it feels good to be alive and to ride here.



JEN'S SMILE SAYS IT ALL.