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HULL OF A TOUR: 'Pacific Coast Rush' opens with stunning views

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SEATTLE, MOUNT RAINIER and MOUNT ST. HELENS, Wash./COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE, Ore.— Two dozen industry folks and friends who share a passion for motorcycling and boating gathered in Seattle during the weekend to launch a spectacular weeklong tour of the West Coast.



Hull of a Tour Pacific Coast Rush riders get ready to rumble from the Alexander Marine USA offices in Seattle. Photo by Jim Krueger.

This year's event — the third in a series — is aptly coined the Pacific Coast Rush. It is expressly designed to mix a thrilling twist of cruising adventures on land and sea.

The festivities were launched in style on Saturday at the luxe Seattle waterfront enclave of Alexander Marine USA, which partnered with Regal Boats as event sponsors. Alexander Marine is one of the newest Regal dealers, and because it had quickly sold out of its inventory of Regal cruisers, dealership vice president Ray Prokorym, GM Emiko Kelly, creative director Ashley Harper and Regal West Coast sales manager Kyle Mazanti brainstormed to organize an awesome cruising brunch for our crew aboard a stunning 2012 Ocean Alexander 78-foot motoryacht, captained by Paul Grosbeck.



A celebration brunch on Saturday was jointly hosted by tour sponsors Regal Boats and Alexander Marine USA aboard a 78-foot Ocean Alexander motoryacht. Photo by Jim Krueger.

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Our riders were in awe as we boarded the stately yacht and set sail for a few hours on picturesque Lake Union and Lake Washington. We rode under picture-perfect blue skies and saw many intriguing sights, including the iconic Space Needle, an impressive cluster of million-dollar houseboats, the sprawling University of Washington complex and a very robust waterfront that was teeming with sportboats and cruisers, sailboats, seaplanes, paddleboards, kayaks and tons of sculls and racing shells.

Our thanks to Regal and Alexander Marine USA for an incredible toast to our tour, along with a fabulous brunch spread that even included fresh Washington salmon! As is custom and a distinguishing component to our unique event, we loved bringing boating to the forefront.

About 1:30 p.m. we gathered for a group photo, bid our heartfelt thanks and fond farewells and revved up the engines — and wow: what a powerful rumble! Our tour started strong, with 24 riders and 16 sexy, shiny motorcycles of all shapes and brands. We had eagerly awaited this day for months, and we were ready to get the show on the road!

Our first motorcycle destination was the Mount Rainier National Park and the Sunrise Visitors Center, the highest drive point there. As we climbed the mountain through adrenaline-inspired roads, we were moved by the breathtaking vista that appeared before us. Mount Rainier was utterly majestic!

For many, the revelation of this glorious sight will no doubt be a highlight of our adventure! The mountain itself, coupled with daring roads, the scenery and the sweet, cool, crisp mountain air, was simply intoxicating!

As daylight began to fade, we loaded up and headed out for an hour's ride to our home for the night, the famous Paradise Lodge, which is operated by the National Park Service. We gathered at the dining hall for a joyous dinner and feasted on waitstaff favorites, including my pick of delectable buffalo meatloaf. We were all exhausted and ready to crash after a full day, so we headed to our rooms, which were

underwhelming, to say the least. It's the price to pay to stay on property, and though pretty rustic, it provided the bare necessities.



Dawn broke on Sunday, and with it came a small group of riders who planned an early-morning hike to catch a glimpse of Mount Rainier in all her grandeur. We scrambled up about half a mile of steep terrain and were simply awestruck by the burst of beautiful, colorful wildflowers and blooms as far as the eye could see, along with a verdant green forest that flanked the mountain and surrounding area. What an invigorating way to start the day!

The temperature was a chilly 63 degrees, so we bundled up and set off for the main attraction: Mount Saint Helens. We conquered many more magnificent mountain curves en route, plus one provocative stretch that had its share of tooth-jarring ruts.

We finally arrived at the Windy Ridge vista, which is sobering in its own right. The tragedy associated with the original 1980 eruption remains evident today as signs of its volcanic power and destruction remain visible — a reminder of nature's force and strength.



The tour group experienced a challenging ride to Mount St. Helens. Photo by Jim Krueger.

After touring the area (Kyle Mazanti *ran* up steps that resembled the Great Wall of China), we dimbed back onto our bikes and ambled leisurely back down the mountain, had a lengthy lunch in the tiny town of Cougar and removed layers of clothing as the temperature started to rise. We rolled our way to Oregon and the historic Columbia River Gorge, seeing fun boating activities happening all along the route. Another awesome story and site!

Although some of the crew called it a day and headed to the comfort of a cushy hotel and a welcome shower, a few of us joined our extraordinary road captain and route planner, Jim Krueger, to view a string of famous waterfalls, including Bridal Veil, Wahkeena and Latourell Falls, with a stop at Multnomah, the most famous, to stretch our legs and snap some pix.



The historic Columbia River Gorge provided spectacular sights for tour riders.

It was yet another phenomenal assault on our senses! And then it was time to throttle up and head one final hour to our hotel in Hood River.

We logged nearly 500 miles the first two days, which may not sound like much unless you're on two wheels and living on authentic "mountain" time! Our weekend was so exhilarating — and it's only going to get better!

I'll be blogging every day this week and next Monday, and we invite you to join us right here for a virtual ride-along!

Wanda Kenton Smith is the event producer and publicist of Boaterz n Bikerz of America: Hull of a Tour. This year's Pacific Coast Rush is presented by title sponsor Freedom Boat Club, platinum sponsor Regal Boats, retail sponsor Alexander Marine USA and media sponsor Soundings Trade Only, with Kenton Smith Marketing handling publicity.

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