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HULL OF A TOUR: Riders were 'California Dreamin'

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WHITE CITY, Ore., to EUREKA, Calif. — Several of our Pacific Coast Rush riders commented to me on Tuesday that the morning ride was one of the best, if not *the best* motorcycle ride they'd ever experienced. Nothing makes an event planner happier than hearing those words of praise.

Kickstands were up at White City, Ore., at 9 a.m. sharp. The temperature was 92 degrees and heating up fast, which can be totally doable so long as you're moving and remain hydrated.

We all gassed up and then fell in formation behind our fearless leader, road captain and route planner, Jim Krueger. Our posse jumped onto Highway 199 South at Rogue City, where our exciting adventure began. For the next two and a half hours, we were all magically transformed into playful kids again, riding with pure, unadulterated joy and abandon! We frolicked and danced over the foothills, our bikes moving to the beat of our own happy hearts.



Women from the Hull of a Tour group are shown at a rest stop en route to Crescent City, Calif.

There is a natural rhythm to motorcycling, and never is it more apparent than when you're riding the hills or curvy mountain roads. Our ride was a thrilling non-stop two-hour roller coaster-caliber experience with plenty of action to test your skills. There were times when I could actually hear myself giggling like a schoolgirl as I successfully maneuvered a series of corkscrew twists without overthinking the moves.



The longer you ride and the more you practice, the quicker you improve. I remember an early ride in my motorcycle career when I took on multiple challenges I wasn't really prepared to take. However, that experience expedited my learning curve and accelerated my progress.

One of the reasons I so love riding the mountain terrain is that it challenges me and pushes me to reach new limits. I also am a keen observer, and it's great to get a bird's-eye view of other seasoned riders and learn their tricks of the trade. Nothing beats getting into the groove and finding the sweet spot!

There was a collective horn honking and fist pumping as we passed a California welcome sign. Washington state and Oregon delivered amazing roads and vistas, and both had far exceeded my wildest expectations. However, we'd all been California dreamin' and were eager to explore the bounty of this legendary coast.

Within five minutes of leaving our happy space en route to our luncheon destination, an astounding thing happened. Remember those toasty morning temps in Oregon? No sooner had we reached the northeastern part of Crescent City when we were instantly chilled to the bone! In a matter of a few miles and minutes, the temperature plummeted from the 90s to a freezing 61 degrees, which feels a lot colder when you're riding!



It was a cool but beautiful morning at Crescent City Beach in California.

As we sprinted to the Chart Room Restaurant right on the famed California coastline, we found it blanketed in a layer of cool, gray fog. I was surprised to see kids and adults alike in swimsuits, but perhaps this is the norm? We rushed over to take some photos and then started walking to the restaurant to enjoy some scrumptious fresh seafood.

Oddly, we began to hear loud barking in the background, following by a cacophony of obnoxious snorts. We looked around to find the source, and there to our amazement was a whole chorus of blubbery sea lions and seals who were welcoming us to the Golden State!



The riders stopped at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, where the movie "Jurassic Park" was shot.

After lunch we took a quick hour-long ride to Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, about an hour away. It was the scene where the famous movie "Jurassic Park" was shot, and you could easily see why it served as the perfect setting. We took some time to hike the area around the visitors' center, but I don't want to spoil the thunder since we're riding through the spectacular Avenue of the Giants tomorrow. Stay posted!

We cruised the last leg to Eureka and wrapped our day with a fun and festive evening featuring a dinner hosted by our title sponsor, Freedom Boat Club. In my research for the trip I'd learned about a really cool motorcycle hub in downtown Eureka called the Black Lightning Motorcycle Café. I reached out to the owners, Jeff and Cassandra Hesseltine, to see whether we might host a party there. They generally are only open for breakfast and lunch, but they generously agreed to welcome our group after hours.

We parked our bikes in designated motorcycle-only spots, as well as on the sidewalk. Once we had finished some photography, we were warmly welcomed to this unique cafe, which doubles as a great retail and parts facility. All of the menu items are named after motorcycles, and the owner built the bar area and many of the tables using motorcycle parts. I enjoyed a delicious Triumph plate; others munched on the Harley, or the Guzzi, even the Norton, among others.

Although the food was really tasty and fresh, just sharing time and breaking bread together in a relaxed atmosphere was such a highlight. We are at the midpoint of our trip already, and many new friendships have been born, which is always one of the best outcomes of these tours.



The motorcycle-themed Black Lightning Cafe was Tuesday's dinner stop for the tour riders. Title sponsor Freedom Boat Club hosted the dinner. Photo by Jim Krueger.

Of course, you can't take motorcycle folks into a motorcycle retail place without expecting some action. We are like kids in the candy shop. Cool T-shirts, motorcycle videos, and even a new pair of riding boots were purchased!

A very special thanks to John Giglio and Freedom Boat Club for sponsoring this enjoyable dinner. Freedom is also hosting the group for a special splashdown Sailabration and sunset cruise in San Francisco.

Thanks also to Jeff, Cassandra and the superb service staff of Black Lightning Café for a memorable experience in Eureka. You can bet we will share this with both our biker and boating friends (here first)! If you're in Eureka, this is the hot spot you don't want to miss!

I'll be blogging every day this week and next Monday, and I invite you to join us right here for a virtual ride-along! If you miss a day and want to catch up, check out the archives at Soundings Trade Only; type Hull of a Tour in the search window.

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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