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## HULL OF A TOUR: Ferry ride is a gateway to the Outer Banks

Posted on May 20th, 2015 Written by [Wanda Kenton Smith](#)



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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — The Freedom Ride lived up to its name on Tuesday in more ways than one. It was one “hull of a ride!”

The first half of the day was spectacular!

We awoke in Morehead City, N.C., to near-perfect riding conditions. Beautiful blue skies, a gentle breeze, comfortable T-shirt riding temperatures and virtually no traffic were exactly what we’d hoped for as we leisurely cruised to our first stop in Cedar Island, N.C., the boarding point for the state-operated ferry service that would whisk us and our bikes to Ocracoke, N.C. This is one of seven coastal ferry routes that the North Carolina Department of Transportation operates.

That first leg was relaxing and easy, not to mention breathtaking at moments. We rolled like warm butter over country bridges, winding our way through a dazzling display of springtime blooms, catching teasing glimpses of sparkling waterways as we rode. It was an exhilarating way to greet the day!



The tour riders visit Kill Devil Hills on Tuesday at the monument that pays tribute to Wilbur and Orville Wright.

All of us had pre-paid our ferry tolls, so when we arrived we were directed to a collection of campers, cars, trucks and motorcycles to wait for our ferry to arrive. This was a new experience for me, and it was awesome to see how it worked.

As the ferry approached our boarding stop, its heavy ramp dropped and a sea of vehicles smoothly drove out. Then it was our turn to board. The caravan of four-wheeled vehicles boarded first to port, and then the Harleys, Ducatis, Hondas and BMW motorcycles kicked into gear and shifted to starboard and our designated parking location. With mere inches between our bikes, we were snugly situated for a two-hour-and-fifteen-minute ride to the Outer Banks.

Walking the ferry was a simple proposition. Outdoor benches ringed the exterior, and some folks parked there with books for the duration. Others chose to ride in cooler and more comfortable conditions in the air-conditioned passenger lobby, which offered tables and settees. A few of our crew stretched out to nap; others took advantage of the time to mix and mingle with rider friends and other passengers.

Me? I had gotten an email from my editor, Jack Atzinger, that he had received my blog for the day, but the images were missing in action. The laptop was locked in the chase vehicle, so instead of having the option to re-send the best shots, I spent the first 30 minutes underway feverishly plucking photos from my iPhone in hopes they would be magically transported in cyberspace before we lost cellphone coverage! Once confirmation came that the photos had landed, I exhaled and was able to chill with the rest of my crew.



The historic lighthouse at Cape Hatteras was a favorite tour stop.

We landed in Ocracoke and rolled off in the same organized fashion in which we had boarded. It was nearly noon, so we decided to stop at a little café for lunch. We then rode through a collection of eclectic towns, resplendent with pastel-colored beach houses, restaurants and shops, until we picked up a second ferry and repeated the same operation on a smaller vessel.

We landed on the fabled Cape Hatteras, which I'd frequently read about but had never visited. We thoroughly enjoyed cruising the coast, and we stopped long enough to admire and take a few pictures at the historic Cape Hatteras lighthouse.

The afternoon was perfectly uneventful until we began our approach to Nags Head and we could both feel and see changes coming. We arrived minutes before 5 p.m. at our planned destination at Kill Devil Hills, the famed site where Orville and Wilbur Wright discovered flight. We rode around the state-operated attraction and grabbed a few more photos while a few of our crew scrambled to the top of the monument hill.

As we left the Kitty Hawk museum and attraction area, everything changed. As we gassed up, the skies darkened and a light spit of rain descended. We had 2-1/2 more hours to go to reach our evening destination in Williamsburg, Va., so we zipped up the rain gear and throttled forward.



Tour riders wait to board the ferry at Cedar Island, N.C., on Tuesday for a ride to the Outer Banks.

The next few hours were challenging, to say the least. From the Outer Banks all the way to our departure out of the tunnel in Norfolk, we experienced a mix of rain conditions. Sometimes it pelted in sheets and sometimes it was light, but the rain was a continuous factor and threat. No whining, though. Bikers worth their salt will tell you that weather is just part of the territory. We deal with it.



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We kept a tight formation on the busy highways, and despite a few close calls because of the action of careless cages (a biker's term for cars), we persevered and carried on. When we *finally* saw the road sign for Williamsburg 24 miles away, I think we all breathed a big sigh of relief. The skies here were welcoming, breaking into a dappled pink-and-purplish-blue sunset as we arrived. We exited the ramp for the hotel and found ourselves surrounded by lush green trees and rolling hills.

We had made it! Glory hallelujah, there was a shout for joy upon arrival, and that jubilant spirit prevailed among our riders as we celebrated another day over dinner at the local smokehouse. We roared with laughter at the table until tears spilled as we shared stories and recounted the day's adventures and near-mishaps. Yes, it had been a hull of a day and one that none of us will likely ever forget.

Today, we're riding to Annapolis and hooking up with Dan Sommerville at Freedom Boat Club for another awesome adventure! It's boating time and the Blue Angels!

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