

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

26th July to 16th August 2013



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Introduction

In May 2012 I had just returned from an overseas trip to Thailand and Vietnam. I decided that in 2013, to co-incide with my 55th birthday, that I would do a bike ride somewhere overseas. I looked at various tour options in Asia, Europe, UK, New Zealand & USA. And then I thought why not the iconic Route 66 on a Harley Davidson.

From that day on, my now famous saying was "I've never ridden a Harley in my life, never wanted to, but I've got to ride a Harley on Route 66.

It was something that I wanted to share with some good mates, so I sent out a group email to about 12 of my mates, well people I know anyway. Ray & Brett (Nob) were instantly onboard, and in the end that's who it was, Hazza, Ray & Nob.

After some searching on the Internet, a plan was formulated, and preparations begun. As funds were not unlimited a self-guided tour was the preferable option. We found a Reverse Route 66 self guided tour offered by California Sunriders

(<http://www.california-sunriders.com/>) was the cheapest deal going. Instead of travelling the traditional Route 66 direction from Chicago to LA, we were going to pick up the bikes in LA, and travel West → East, LA to Chicago. The tour package included hire of the bikes for the 13 day trip, accommodation in good class hotels / motels for 15 nights, and a guide book detailing our route, daily plan, tourist hotspots along our route, and accommodation details. A booking was made, and over the next 12 months bikes were selected, flights booked, and a myriad of other details sorted.

And then we were on our way.

Friday 26th July

A big day. Left Townsville at 0600. Met up with Ray at Brisbane International Airport and departed there at 1035. Arrived in LA at 0630 the same morning we left Australia, after a 15 hour flight, safe & sound. Didn't get much sleep on the plane. Spent most of the time watching movies, with a few catnaps in-between.

On arrival at LAX we cleared Immigration & Customs, and Ray and I decided to hang out at the airport until Brett arrived at 0930, so enjoyed my 3rd breakfast for the day. Finally got my breakfast burrito that I'd been hanging out for for a while. The first of a few for the trip.

After a bit of stuffing around we finally found the right bus to take us to the hire car yard where we had pre-arranged a car. Got a brand new (Red, because they go faster) Mustang convertible with only 800 miles on the clock. Pretty flash, except not much legroom for the backseat passenger. But I was the designated driver for the weekend, so didn't worry me.

After picking up the car we headed towards Long Beach to our motel. Brett had the GPS, and therefore became the navigator. We did a detour into Wilmington to check out the Commercial Diving Center where I did my commercial diver training in 1984, but no dive school there any more. Then did a few laps of Long Beach showing the boys a few sights and some of my old hangouts from when I lived there.

We were too early to book into the motel, so went out to a large shopping mall. We all needed local phones, so picked up a mobile each there, and did a bit of additional purchasing as required.

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Only had about 4 near misses the first day where I went to turn onto the wrong side of the road, but Brett or Ray or both yelled at me when I did that, so eventually worked it out.

After booking into the motel, we then found a pie restaurant and had a feed. Back to the motel for an early night, and surprisingly slept really well.



Haz at Brisbane Airport prior to departure



Ray at Brisbane Airport prior to departure

Saturday 27th July

Left the motel at about 0800, and drove down to San Ysidro, which is just on the US side of the Mexican border. We arrived at our motel at 1100, which again was too early to book in. So off to Mexico we went, 5 minutes walk from our motel and we walked straight into Mexico.

It was a bit of a different story coming back out, especially for Ray & Nob. They decided they didn't like Mexico. They got pretty much straight on a bus, and 4 1/2 hours later they were back at the motel.

I was a bit more adventurous. Ended up doing a pub crawl, walking around town a bit, and talking to a few people. I headed back about 1830, and took 55 mins to get back through the line of illegal immigrants. Had a great day, but I guess Ray & Nob did in the end as well, as they found a Levi's shop and bought some stuff.

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Red (because they go faster) Mustang



Haz & Ray in the Mustang at Long Beach motel



Tijuana



Ray & Haz about to enter Mexico

Sunday 28th July

Travelled back from San Ysidro to LA.

Went to Glendale Harley Davidson where we are picking the bikes up from on Monday morning to suss it out, then down to Venice Beach. Venice is always a great place to have a look around and check out the freak show.

After a couple of hours wandering around Venice we went to our hotel near LAX and booked in. We then dropped the hire car back to the yard, and it was only a 5 minute walk back to our hotel.

Had a couple of rums and some dinner, and an early night ready for the start of the big adventure tomorrow.

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Haz & Ray at Venice Beach



Haz & Brett at Venice Beach

Monday 29th July

Day 1 – Santa Monica CA to Victorville CA 97 miles / 157 km

Hired a chauffeured Lincoln Town Car to take us from our hotel to Glendale Harley Davidson where we were to pick up the bikes at 1000. After a bit of paperwork, a couple of purchases including a helmet and T-shirt for me, and a quick familiarisation on the bikes, off we went. First time on bikes on the wrong side of the road, and coping with LA traffic and navigating our way around the freeways. Once again Brett was the designated navigator, but with his trusty GPS mounted on his tank he managed to get us to Santa Monica Pier, which is the official end(but in our case the start) of Route 66.

Santa Monica Pier has an amusement park on it, plus a heap of shops, etc. It also featured in the Tom Hank's movie "Big". We had lunch at the Bubba Gump Shrimp Co restaurant, famous from another movie.

Fortified from our (too) big lunch we then hit the road and headed for our first overnight stop at Victorville. We were navigating with Nob's GPS for the first couple of hours, but it eventually went flat, so had to wing it from there. Funnily enough, that was about the last time we used the GPS in anger until we reached Chicago. Today it was all freeway riding, and we eventually arrived at our Victorville overnight stop. We survived the first day on the road.

After refuelling the bikes and booking into our hotel at Victorville we went for a quick ride around town. Victorville was a pretty big town, and I think a lot of people commute to LA from there. There is not much green grass out there. I think that part of California is desert, with not a lot of spare water.

I found the Americans that we have come across lately to be are friendly and they like to have a chat. Everywhere we pull up somebody starts talking to us.

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There have been not many bikes on the road yet, but funnily enough we see a lot more Jap bikes than Harleys in California, although this definitely changes as we head further eastwards.

And my thoughts that Harleys are very agricultural is not much off the mark. Pick up the bikes in LA. Travel to Santa Monica Pier to start (end) of Route 66. Travel Santa Monica to Victorville, CA. Mostly freeway riding,.



Picking up the bikes at Glendale Harley Davidson



Haz, Ray & Nob at Santa Monica Pier



Haz, Ray & Nob at Santa Monica Pier



The start of Route 66

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Tuesday 30th July

Day 2 – Victorville CA to Needles CA 174 miles / 280 km

Another good day's ride, if a bit warm.

Started about 0800 this morning by backtracking 10 miles down the freeway to the Summit Inn, which is a typical Route 66 diner. They also sell Ostrich burgers and Ostrich egg omelettes, but we had already had breakfast so didn't partake of any of that.

We were then pretty much on Route 66 from there until Barstow where we stopped for a refuel and some smoko. Victorville to Barstow was a nice little ride, with some pretty interesting scenery along the way. There traffic is very light on Route 66 as most of the cars and all of the many trucks travel on the Interstate, and generally it is not too bad a road surface, and definitely better than most of the Bruce Highway. There were a few interesting rock formations through this part of the country, but lots of barren desert with a few houses in-between. You wonder what people do for a living out here.

Took a wrong turn at one stage and took a detour into the real desert, as seen in the photo below. Really we were still in sight of the Interstate, but the road eventually just ran out at some ruins, and we had to backtrack again.

Had lunch at a diner at Ludlow, which was a railway & mining town many years ago. No Ostrich burgers or omelettes here though.

Then from Ludlow back onto the original Route 66 via Amboy for about 40 miles, and then back on the Interstate for the run into Needles. Needles is on the Colorado River, which is the state border between California and Arizona. Interestingly enough it also has grass, which we hadn't seen too much of since LA. But obviously they are able to get a plentiful supply of water from the river. There were lots of pretty flash speedboats here also, with even a marina or two.

The temperature had gone from a pleasant 85°F in Los Angeles to 95°F at Victorville to 105°F at Needles. After booking into the motel first stop was the motel pool to cool off and get some moisture back into the body.

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Summit Inn



Ostrich eggs at the Summit Inn



Our bikes at Barstow



Slightly geographically misplaced in the desert



Ruins in the desert



Colorado River at Needles

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Wednesday 31st July

Day 3 – Needles CA to Williams AZ 176 miles / 282 km

Departed Needles at 0800 in near 100F heat again. Crossed the border from California to Arizona shortly thereafter and started to climb away from the plains. By the time we arrived at Kingman just over an hour later we had climbed approximately 5000' and the temperature was a bit nicer. We were then back onto old Route 66 for a very pleasant ride.

First stop was Truxton to see one of the most famous Route 66 images, a car wreck that serves as a milepost marker.

Then onto Hackberry General Store, which like most every other shop in every town so far has a heap of Route 66 memorabilia.

Next stop was the Grand Canyon Caverns for lunch and a guided tour through the caverns. There is an elevator which takes you 210' down into the caverns. If you saw the Billy Connolly Route 66 series this is where he stayed in the cavern overnight. Cost \$700 / night, but would be pretty peaceful down there.

After that continued on, still on the original 66 to Seligman which is a town almost completely devoted to Route 66 memorabilia. Ran into a group of blokes & sheilas, or as the Yanks would call them, guys & gals, from WA. Had a bit of a chat with them. They were going to Sturgis on hired Harleys.

Continued on for a further 20 or so miles, then onto the Interstate again for the last 20 mile run into Williams, our overnight stop.

Williams is an interesting little town. It was the last Route 66 town to be bypassed by the Interstate in 1984, and again is devoted to feeding the tourist's appetite, for memorabilia, food and drinks. It seems to be doing alright too, with quite a few new motels in the area that we are staying just off the Interstate.

We had an interesting discussion with the local Harley repair shop owner about bikes, guns and Barack Obama. He is a good old boy originally from Alabama, and might colloquially be described as a redneck. But definitely interesting, and entertaining.

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California – Arizona border



Truxton mile marker



Ray on old Yamaha XS 650



Hackberry General Store



Grand Canyon Caverns



Grand Canyon Caverns

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Thursday 01st August

Day 4 – Williams AZ to Grand Canyon AZ return 150 miles / 240 km

Departed the hotel at 0800 and rode the bikes from Williams to the Grand Canyon Airport.

From there we flew on a helicopter tour over the Kaibib Forest on our way to the Canyon. Then over the South Rim, and into the Canyon proper. Words cannot describe the grandeur of it, but suffice to say we did enjoy the view. Flew over and around the Canyon, then over the North Rim and back to the Airport. About a 50 minute flight in all. The option was to follow the road along the South Rim, which we did not do, or head back towards Williams. In hindsight I would have liked to have had a few views of the Canyon from ground level, but we were running short of time by that stage.



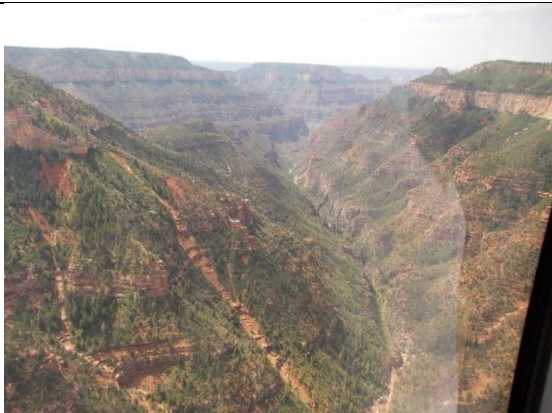

We headed back to Valle which is about ½ way back to Williams for a late lunch, and then for a look at the Planes of Fame Air Museum there. There were quite a few interesting displays. Most of the planes there still fly, and are flown regularly. The exception was a WWII Messerschmitt, and a Constellation which had a very colourful history, including being used in the Berlin Airlift, as General Douglas McArthur's personal aircraft during the Korean War, and as a NASA aircraft involved with the Apollo space program.

	
Maverick Helicopters, Grand Canyon	Kaibib Forest

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South Rim, Grand Canyon	Grand Canyon
	
Grand Canyon	Planes of Fame Museum, Valle

Friday 02nd August

Day 5 – Williams AZ to Gallup NM 220 miles / 353 km

Departed Williams after breakfast. Travelled to Flagstaff, and then out to Sunset Crater and Wupatki National Monument. Sunset Crater is an ancient volcano which erupted in 1064, and continued erupting intermittently for the next 155 years. Wupatki is a series of Indian homes and villages from around the same period.

We then went on to the Meteor crater approximately 35 km before Winslow. An estimated 50 metre diameter meteor impacted here approximately 50,000 years ago, leaving a crater approximately 1265 metres wide and 150 metres deep. The crater was used by NASA for training astronauts and testing lunar vehicles for moon operations between 1963 & 1972.

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After the Meteor Crater we visited the Jackrabbit Trading Co and Winslow, made famous in a certain Eagles song.

Then on to Holbrook and through the Petrified Forest and Painted Desert National Monument. By this time it was raining. The Painted Desert was another awesome spectacle, but would have been more pleasant if the sun was out.

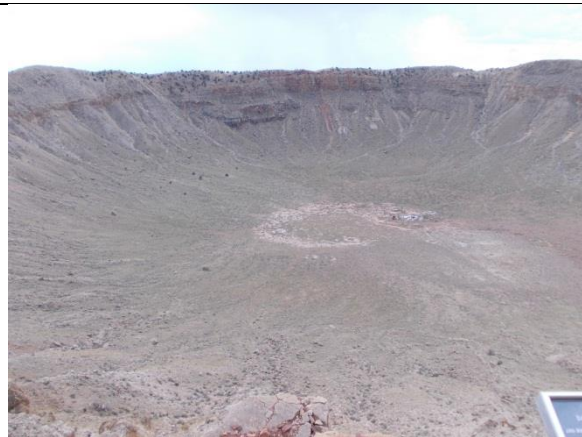
From there it was an approximate 80 mile run to Gallup, but by now it was about 1730, and we were in the middle of a torrential downpour and thunder & lightning storm. Nothing for it but to run flat out for Gallup. It was a really fun ride. Found our hotel in Gallup, got the wet clothing off, had a nice warm shower & dinner.



Sunset Crater Volcano



Wupatki National Monument



Meteor Crater



Haz at Petrified Forest

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 A landscape photograph of the Painted Desert, showing colorful, eroded hills in shades of red, orange, and green under a cloudy sky. A large green bush is in the foreground.	 A photograph of a two-story brick building in Winslow, Arizona. The building has a sign that reads "WINSLOW * ARIZONA". A person is standing in front of the building, and a street lamp is visible on the right.
Painted Desert	Standing on the corner at Winslow Arizona What a fine sight to see

Saturday 03rd August

Day 6 Gallup NM to Santa Fe NM 198 miles / 319 km

We departed Gallup at our usual time of 0800, and had a mix of Interstate and Route 66, heading for Acoma Sky City. This is an Indian Village located on the top of a mesa. It is one of the longest continuously inhabited communities in the US, having been originally established in approximately 1100 AD. There are about 300 stone houses, a Spanish church and a cemetery on top of the mesa. About 50 people regularly live here, although the population increases on weekends and holidays. There is no electricity, running water or sewage disposal. The inhabitants make a living by selling native artwork & pottery and food to the tourists. The original access to the top of the mesa was by a single steep stairway, but a roadway was blasted during the 1950's.

Then we continued on to Santa Fe with a little side trip through Albuquerque.

The scenery in New Mexico is stunning. There are some flat areas, but a lot of areas are very weatherworn with lots of mountains, mesas, etc. Coming out of Gallup was particularly impressive with incredible views all around.

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El Rancho Hotel, Gallup



Smoko at Earl's Diner, Gallup



View from Acoma Sky Village



Acoma Sky Village

Sunday 04th August

Day 7 – Santa Fe rest day.

After a leisurely Mexican breakfast we visited the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery, which was straight across the road from our hotel. Over 40,000 people are buried there. Mostly Veterans from the Civil War onwards, plus Veterans wives. It is spread over about 80 acres.

In the afternoon we explored Downtown Santa Fe and the Indian markets.

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Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery



Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery

Monday 05th August

Day 8 – Santa Fe NM to Amarillo TX 285 miles / 456 km

After departing Santa Fe we headed for a breakfast stop at Las Vegas (New Mexico, not Nevada).

After another Mexican breakfast we then cut across to Tucumcari on Highway 104. At first we were in very flat ranchland country with plenty of good grass. Then the road suddenly dropped down off the plateau through a nice cutting. This was a very scenic route, and a few good twisty bits for the bikes. Can't lean the Harleys too far before you start scraping the footboards unfortunately.

At Tucumcari it was back on the I40, until we turned off at San Jon. We were then on pre-1950's Route 66, which was an unpaved section for approximately 18 miles, but still pretty good riding. Stopped off at Glenrio, Texas for a few photos of an abandoned motel, then back on the I40 towards Amarillo.

Stopped for a late lunch at another Route 66 diner at Vega TX.

Another stop at the Cadillac Ranch just outside Amarillo, to view the ranch and do a bit of spray-painting on the Caddys.

Then a short ride into Amarillo, and into the hotel. Hooters for dinner.

Plenty of other tour groups on the road, but all going the other way, or to Sturgis.

Living the dream. Enjoying the hell out of the trip myself.

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Coming down off the plateau near Tucumcari



Unpaved section Route 66



Abandoned motel, Glenrio TX



Route 66 diner, Vega TX

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Cadillac ranch



Dinner at Hooters, Amarillo TX

Tuesday 06th August

Day 9 – Amarillo TX to Weatherford OK 190 miles / 306 km

Another day, another state.

Did a bit of Interstate 40, and a bit of Route 66 today. A good mix, and a pretty easy 190 miles.

First stop was McLean to check out a museum. It wasn't open for another couple of hours, so gave it a miss. The main street of McLean was interesting as it was completely paved with red brick. Also the main ring road around town was one way, as we found out after wondering why everybody was flashing their lights and waving their arms at us. It was all good, and nobody got hurt.

We then traveled onto Clinton OK, and another Route 66 museum. Had lunch at an Italian restaurant there also. I just wanted a light lunch, so a bit of Calamari and garlic bread. Yeah right, not too much in the US is light. Although Ray has had a couple of salads for lunch the last couple of days, and although they are big, at least they are healthy.

Arrived at the motel at Weatherford, to find out that the temperature is back up to 102°F.

Visited the Stafford Air & Space Museum (<http://staffordmuseum.com/>) at Weatherford Airport. It is named after Thomas P Stafford, who was born and raised here. He was involved in four space flights, he piloted Gemini VI, and commanded Gemini IX, Apollo 10, and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project mission.

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The museum features exhibits about aviation, space exploration and rocketry, and a collection of over 20 historic aircraft. Displays include artifacts from the Space Shuttle program, Hubble Space Telescope and the Mir Space Station, a Moon rock, a Titan II missile, a Mark 6 Re-entry vehicle and a Gemini spacecraft. Other exhibits include retired aircraft, such as a Russian MiG21R and an F16. Full-size replicas displayed include the Wright Flyer, Spirit of St. Louis, and Apollo Command Module.

Back to the motel for a cooling dip in the pool, and then out to dinner at another steak house.



McLean - Alan Reed Museum



Conoco service station



Route 66 Museum, Clinton OK



Ray's Ceaser salad

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Scale model of lunar lander, Stafford museum



US jet, Stafford museum

Wednesday 07th August

Day 10 – Weatherford OK to Tulsa OK 177 miles / 285 km

Mostly on old Route 66, with very little Interstate. A very good ride through some fertile farm country.

Departed Weatherford, and rode Route 66 through Bridgeport, Geary, Calumnet, and onto Interstate 44 for only a short run into El Reno. Highlight of this part of the trip was a multitude of drill rigs just off the road between Geary and Calumnet.

At El Reno we were back onto Route 66, and continued all the way to Tulsa, except for a short section bypassing Oklahoma City.

We had a short stop off to check out a gun carrier at the American Legion hall in El Reno.

Then onto Yukon where we stopped for smoko at the Fat ElvU.S. Diner. Got to say I had the best Chocolate / Vanilla milkshake I've ever had, with little shaving of chocolate included in the mix, and a couple of photos with Fat ElvU.S. himself.

Then a stop off at the Big Red Barn in Arcadia, OK. The round barn was originally built in 1898, and restored as a tourist attraction and reopened in 1992.

Missed out on a visit to the Seaba Motorcycle Museum at Chandler OK, as today was Wednesday, and Wednesday is the only day it is closed. Bit disappointed, but plenty more to see along the way.

Stopped off at a service station in Edmond, just outside Oklahoma City. Got talking there to a motorcycle cop on a pretty tooled up Police BMW, including a pistol and AR15 mounted on RHR of the bike.

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Then continued on Route 66 through a heap of small towns, until we reached Tulsa.

Established ourselves in the Hyatt Regency hotel, and then had a few drinks & dinner at Fassier Hall, a German beer haus and restaurant.



South Canadian River bridge



American Legion Hall, El Reno OK



Oklahoma drill rigs



Fat ElvU.S. Diner

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Edmond Police Officer & bike



Seaba Station motorcycle museum

Thursday 08th August

Day 11 – Tulsa OK to Rolla MI 289 miles / 465 km

Departed Tulsa this morning with very heavy overcast and rain in front of us. But somehow managed to dodge the rain all day, and a very pleasant days riding was had by all.

Shortly after leaving Tulsa we somehow managed to lose Ray, when Nob and I turned onto old Route 66, and Ray stayed on I44.

Nob and I continued on alone, and Ray missed out on a typical Oklahoma breakfast of biscuits (scones), gravy (white sauce), eggs (some yellow round stuff), and sausage (patty). Absolutely disgusting.

Nob and I stopped off at Claremore to check out the JM Davis Arms & Historical Museum. It is the largest private firearm collection in the world with over 50,000 exhibits, including 13,000 firearms, plus military weapons, knives, swords, saddles, spurs, local branding irons, Native American artifacts, German beer steins, WW2 posters, and many other items. There were even some hoods and nooses used in actual hangings. We could have spent hours there, but had to get back on the road and try to find Ray.

We eventually caught up with him at Miami, OK (not Florida) where we visited the Route 66 motorcycle museum. Only a fairly small place but had a few different bikes there, plus a few displays related to some motorcycle stuntmen including Evel Knievel.

We then went back onto I44. Stopped for lunch at Joplin, then continued on I44 to St. Robert. Back onto Route 66 for the side trip to Devil's Elbow and the Elbow Inn. A good little biker bar. Had a couple of beers there and some conversation with the locals who were a good crowd.

After an hour or so there, we continued on to our overnight stop at Rolla, Missouri.

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Haz outside JM Davis Firearms Museum



JM Davis Firearms Museum exhibit



Stunt bike, Route 66 Motorcycle Museum



Devil's Elbow rail bridge



Devil's Elbow Bend Bridge



Elbow Inn

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Friday 09th August

Day 12 – Rolla MI to Springfield IL 201miles / 324 km

Had a great day today. I weakened yesterday and bought some cheapo wet weather gear from Walmart (didn't see too many Walmartians), anticipating that it was going to bucket down today. But when we departed Rolla this morning it was in thick fog which lasted pretty much the 100 miles to St Louis. This was a high speed run along the Interstate.

At St Louis we stopped in at the Classic Motorcycle Company (Michael's Motorcycles). Michael assisted with the import of my H1, so thought I'd look him up while we were in town. He is an Aussie boy from Sydney, but married an American girl and has lived in the US for 20 years. His shop is a pretty interesting place. And he has some awesome bikes and always picking up more stuff all the time. Check the link below:

<http://michaelsmotorcycles.com/>

He had a couple of nice R90S's. He was ready to do a deal with me, the best Z1300, a Z1 Jaffa and the best R90S for USD 27,000. I've got enough money laying around, and was tempted, but there goes the house.

Back on the interstate to Staunton IL and a stop at Country Classic Cars. Could have spent the balance of the money on a Classic Car or two. They had a heap of project cars out in the weather, but also 4 or 5 huge sheds full of classic cars for sale.

<http://www.countryclassiccars.com/>

They reckon they have over 600 cars there, and wouldn't be far off the mark.

Then we were on Route 66 all the way into our overnight stop at Springfield, IL. Didn't spot any of the Simpsons, but apparently this is where Abe Lincoln used to hang out.

Had a couple of stops along the way at the Crossroads Diner, and the Sugar Creek Covered Bridge.



Michael's Classic Motorcycles, St Louis IL



1914 Indian 8 Valve Boardtrack Racer

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1948 Ford Pickup & 1963 Ford Ranchero



Crossroads Diner, Mt Olive IL



Sugar Creek covered bridge



Another dinner at Hooters, Springfield IL

Saturday 10th August

Day 13 – Springfield IL to Chicago IL 199 miles / 320 km

We saved the worst day for last.

The plan for today was just to hotfoot it along the Interstate to Chicago, take a few happy snaps at the end of Route 66, and return the bikes to Chicago HD.

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First bad luck of the day was me losing my camera case out of my pocket at 75mph on the Interstate. Second bad luck of the day was Ray nearly cleaning me up as I did a sudden stop to do an illegal U turn on the Interstate to go look for my camera. Ray had everything locked up, and just managed to miss me or go down, and Nob did a sudden duck out to the side to miss me also. Good news was we all survived with no damage, and Ray found my camera case intact with no apparent damage despite sitting on the Interstate for a considerable period of time. Bad news was when I opened the case up the camera had suffered some impact damage and no longer works. Luckily I had been downloading my pictures every day, so had them all.

They say bad luck comes in 3's, and the third bad luck was Nob's bike suffering a front tyre puncture after 2775 miles, about 4 miles from the end point of Route 66. So there we were sitting on the side of the Interstate like stunned mullet, with cars whizzing past us. We got onto Chicago HD, who sent a recovery vehicle out to us. In the meantime there was an accident about 100 metres back down the road from us, so there were cops, ambulances, tow trucks, fire trucks, and traffic reduced from 3 lanes down to one. Our recovery man got there in about an hour, so that wasn't too bad. Loaded the bike up with his ingenious recovery unit, and then Ray and I followed the recovery vehicle a further 30 miles back to Chicago HD.

What a nightmare trip. While Brett sat in the truck's air-conditioned comfort and listened to some good rock tunes, Ray and I were battling the Chicago elements. Took 2 hours to cover 30 miles, but the bulk of that was the 20 miles through Chicago. Traffic was bumper to bumper, several accidents along the way holding things up, and numerous lanes of the motorway closed due to construction most of the way, it was a slow and hot trip. The Harleys run hot at the best of times, and although the air temp was only 75 F, because we were stopped a lot of the time, or just idling along, the radiated heat from the engine, oil lines and oil tank was pretty hard to bear on the inner thighs. Anyway, we eventually got through it, and made it to Chicago HD about 1530.

I must say that the Chicago HD shop was the biggest bike shop I have ever seen. The showroom took up the front half the building, and was huge. The service department took up the other half. There were hundreds of bikes there, plus out in the car park. Could have taken a Harley for a free demo ride, but I was over them after 2800 miles. Nob reckoned that there was a basement that was full of bikes also, and then a heap of apartments upstairs.

Took a \$70 cab ride to our hotel which was very nice and in the trendy part of town. Had a nice dinner at a pub down the road.

All in all, an awesome trip, and well worth the money invested. I would recommend it to anybody.

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Stranded 5 miles from Chicago IL



Motorcycle rescue service



Chicago Harley Davidson showroom



The end (Beginning) of Route 66, Chicago IL

Sunday 11th August & Monday 12th August

With the end of the Route 66 trip, we flew from Chicago to Buffalo, NY. Took a 1 hour cab ride from Buffalo Airport to Niagara Falls, Ontario, to our hotel. Crossing the Canadian border was painless.

Settled ourselves in our hotel rooms. I don't know who Ray paid, but he scored a room on the 40th floor, I was on the 30th floor, and Nob was down in the basement, well the 15th floor anyway. Definitely the most I have ever paid for a hotel room in my life, but worth every cent. The view of the falls from my panoramic window was spectacular.

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

26th July to 16th August 2013

Went for a wander around town for the afternoon. Niagara Falls is a real tourist trap, very similar to the Gold Coast, and everything is way more expensive than anywhere else that we had come across in our travels. But I guess it had to be expected.

We went back to our hotel and had dinner at the Keg Restaurant, which was located on the 9th floor of our hotel, and again has an awesome view of the falls.

After dinner Nob, Ray and I adjourned to my room to finish off the bottle of Bundy while watching the light show as the falls were lit up, and the fireworks over the falls.

Monday we did a bit of a walk around in the morning, and then a 5 hour guided tour to a few of the major tourist attractions in the area. The highlight for me was the Maid in the Mist, which is a 15 – 20 minute boat ride which takes you right under the falls, and literally engulfed in the mist from the falls.



Niagara Falls



Embassy Suites, Niagara Falls



Niagara Falls from hotel window



Niagara Falls from hotel window

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Niagara Falls from Keg restaurant



Maid of the Mist, Niagara Falls



Niagara Falls lit up at night, from hotel window



Fireworks over Niagara Falls

Tuesday 13th August

Tuesday morning saw another taxi ride across the Canadian – US border back to Buffalo airport, and then we flew back to Chicago.

We arrived back in Chicago about lunchtime. Caught the shuttle bus from the airport to the Alamo car rental depot. Nob then decided that we were actually meant to be at the Advantage car rental depot, so had to catch the shuttle bus back to the airport and get on the Advantage shuttle bus to their depot. At least we were getting some additional free sightseeing.

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Picked up the car and set sail for Milwaukee. Nob had also left the GPS in his bag which we had previously left at the hotel in Chicago, and we weren't going to go back there prior to Milwaukee, so we were on our own. I was designated chief navigator, but my contribution was head North, and promptly went to sleep. Ray and Nob managed to work it out between them, and we eventually arrived at our Milwaukee hotel with plenty of time to spare. We did a recce trip that afternoon to locate the HD Museum, and checked out their gift shop.

Wednesday 14th August

Wednesday morning we were at the HD Museum for 0900 opening.

We had a quick look round and then did what they call a "Back Roads Tour" commencing at 1000. Now as everybody knows, I'm not a great fan of Harley Davidson, but I've got to say that this museum is one of the best that I've ever visited. The HD factory started their collection of bikes with a model taken off the production line of every model they have produced, commencing in 1915. The bikes were stored in a huge warehouse where nobody really got to see them until the opening of the HD museum in July 2008. They then were able to find bikes going back to when the first HD was produced in 1903 for display. There are also a lot of special interest bikes in the museum.

The "Back Roads Tour" was well worth doing. It was a guided tour that detailed most of the exhibits in the museum, and took us into the private areas of the museum, including the artifact storage area. They had approximately 350 bikes in their storage racks alone.

See the link below for information on the HD Museum:

http://www.harley-davidson.com/en_US/Content/Pages/HD_Museum/museum.html

It is well worth a visit if you are ever in the Milwaukee area.

Had lunch in their restaurant, did another lap of the gift shop, and then drove back to Chicago.

Brett's wife Debbie and daughter Meg met us in Chicago tonight. Wandered the streets around our hotel The Magnificent Mile, and had pizza at an Italian restaurant for dinner..

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

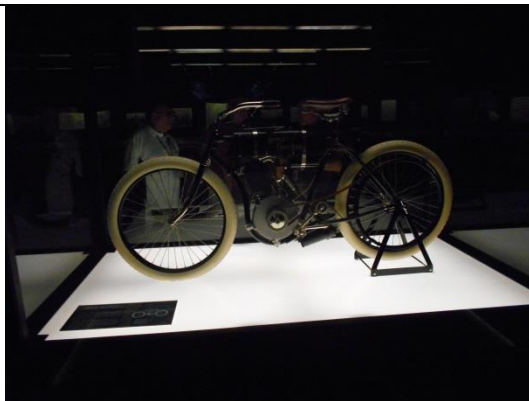
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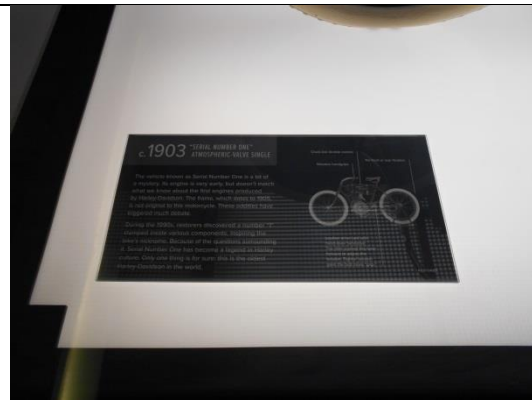
The 3 Amigos in front of Harley Davidson Museum



Harley Davidson Museum, Milwaukee WI



Serial 001, Harley Davidson Museum



1903 description, Harley Davidson Museum

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

26th July to 16th August 2013



Early model HD's, Harley Davidson Museum



"Easyrider" replicas, Harley Davidson Museum



The ultimate man cave, 350 bike storage



Hazza on a static XLCR1000

Thursday 15th August & Friday 16th August

Did a bit of tourist stuff Thursday. Ray had to see the Cook County Courthouse and Daley Plaza from "The Blues Brothers" so tracked that down and got a few photos.

Then did the Willis Towers, formerly Sears Towers. 103 stories and looking straight down off the Sky Deck.

Caught a water taxi down the Chicago River to Navy Pier and had a final trip luncheon at the Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. restaurant there.

Then to the end (Start) of Route 66 for the final trip photo.

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

26th July to 16th August 2013

Friday was the end of the trip for Ray and I, but Nob, Debbie & Meg set off on a road trip from Chicago to Niagara Falls to New York, and Ray and I are on the plane heading home via Dallas – Fort Worth.



Ray outside Cook County Courthouse, Chicago



Chicago street



Haz outside Willis Tower, Chicago



View of Chicago from Willis Tower, Chicago

Hazza, Ray & Nob on Tour

Route 66

26th July to 16th August 2013



Looking straight down 103 floors, Willis Tower, Chicago



Meg, Nob, Debbie, Haz, Ray on Cicago water taxi

Sunday 18th August

After another mammoth flight, and re-crossing the International Date Line, finally arrived home on Sunday 18th August.

The whole trip was an awesome experience with 2 good mates. I would recommend it to anybody.

Planning the next expedition now. Bring it on.