



The Texas Secret - Big Bend National Park

by Dennis Clark

Six riders, five men, and one woman bound for Texas. What's in Texas that's worth a nearly 4,000 mile trip? The answer is Big Bend National Park and the most spectacular scenery in the Lone Star state. Our group left from separate locations in Virginia and North Carolina and met up along the route. As you might expect, the group was well represented by BMW motorcycles with no less than five of the riders mounted on BMW motorrads. The group included Don Williams (BMW 1200 GS), Dennis Clark (BMW 1200 RT), James Locklear (Honda ST1200), Ron Jones (BMW 1200 RT), Laura Jones (BMW 1150 R), and Dennis Clark II (BMW 1200 RT). The group's familiarity with each other from a number of previous adventures, the family atmosphere (Ron and Laura are married and the two Clarks are father and son), and the decided advantage of the talents of über-planner Don Williams made for a safe, fun and well-executed trip.

Don, Ron and Laura left from Reston, VA and James, Dennis and Dennis left from Pembroke, NC for the planned eleven-day roundtrip. There were staggered rendezvous points and the North Carolina contingent met Don Williams in Tuscaloosa, AL at the end of the first day. Our plan was to put in a few heavy days of riding to get to Texas as fast as we could and enjoy the

unfamiliar landscapes of the Texas desert as much as we could. Speaking of the unfamiliar, we encountered a few oddities on the first day of riding. In Georgia, we were treated to the sight of a shirtless rider on I-20 headed east. I am from Northern Virginia and that's something we just do not see in the Washington, DC metro area. We were also treated to the oversized

spectacle of the Talladega Superspeedway in Alabama. A much more interesting sight in Alabama that we did not take time to visit is the Barber Motorsports Park. Motorcyclist of all ages and choice of machine should make a point to visit the Barber Vintage Museum, the home of the largest private motorcycle collection



in the world. *Traveler's Tip:* Riders traveling westbound on I-20 are advised to take caution when entering Alabama. Once you cross into Alabama from Georgia, the speed limit on the interstate drops from 70 mph to 55 mph for about 35 miles. The sudden drop in maximum speed is not lost on Alabama's finest and you will be ticketed for speeding if you don't pay attention. Riders beware. Day two of the trip brought our four-rider group to Palestine, TX. This was another fairly long day in the saddle on I-20, but there were a few

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Out & About

by Al Jones
July 2010

We have had a busy month this past thirty days. Rides and club activities were mostly well attended. The Roadside clean-up was on a warm day and thanks go out to Kevin Nipper, Kelly Mills, his son Zachary who showed up to help Karol and I. The next Roadside clean-up is in August. Hopefully the weather will cooperate and there will be plenty of help.



A Small but enthusiastic team for Adopt-A-Highway day

Thanks go out to Jim Morrison for taking care of some of the newsletter duties while Marc is enjoying the scenery out West. Riders are starting to visit the four corners sites and get their photos. We have already received numerous registration/waivers for that event.

The picnic on 19 June was a great event. Forty to fifty members showed up including some who have not been seen for quite some time (Bobby and Teresa). Teresa was dubbed the Guest of Honor. About a dozen members showed up on bikes despite the mid ninety temps. The Cypress picnic shelter site at the Harris County Park is a great location with tables, shelters and the lake. Charcoal was started about 11:30 am and food served shortly after the noon hour. The club meeting was short and occurred while Texas ice cream was consumed. Everyone had a great time as is evidenced by the photos.

The next meeting is at Pete and Sandy's and will be a good time to get rid of some of those unwanted/unneeded items around the house and garage. It will be a swap meet meeting. Some great rally possibilities are coming up as well with the RA rally in Vermont the first of August, Daniel Boone Rally in mid August and even a Knobby rally in Morganton, NC to be held in September. All great possibilities, to enjoy great roads and people. See you there.

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notable events during the day. First, we crossed the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, MS. The noted river was somewhat anticlimactic because it seemed rather normal in size and sight when crossed on I-20, but the sudden flattening of the land clearly showed we had left the east coast. Second, we passed through Arcadia, LA, which is very near the final resting place of the infamous Bonnie and Clyde. Lastly, we encountered a subtle, but very real indicator that we were not in the Piedmont in the form of a plethora of armadillo road kill. I never saw one alive on the whole trip. Just outside Palestine I saw what would prove to be the single longhorn steer on the whole trip. I really expected to see herds of these Texas icons, but fields full of Bevo's cousins were not to be seen.

The following day was our first day without crossing a state line and marked the real start of the ride because we began to slow the pace a little and this enabled us to take in more of Texas as seen from the saddle. The day's ride took us to Buda, TX just south of Austin. We were treated to the common sight of a working oil pump. It was apparent that oil is pumped where it's found as almost all of the pumps were in cattle fields and farms and sat among the livestock. In this part of Texas, we were treated to herds of cattle, sheep, and goats.

Particularly memorable was the passing of a feedlot where the thick odor of the cattle flowed through my Arai like water. Don't let the romantic language fool you; this was a brutal assault on the olfactory senses. The day was capped off by two major events. First, we ate dinner at the famous Salt Lick Bar-B-Que restaurant in Driftwood. For \$19, you can eat all the beef brisket, sausage, ribs, potato salad, cole slaw, beans, bread, pickles and onions you want for 90 minutes. *Traveler's Tip:* The Salt Lick is cash only and any alcohol is B.Y.O.B. Everyone loved it and I found the beef brisket to be the star of the menu. Second, the day's end brought the last members of the group into the fold as the Jones rode in from Hot Springs, AR.

Day four of the ride brought us to Sonora, TX. On this segment, we ran into our first rain, but that did not present much of an obstacle, nor did it slow us down. We rode the Willow City Loop, a very highly recommended scenic road through the Texas hillside. The area is known for its wildflowers and the recent rain in the area had the bluebonnets in full bloom. If you are into flowers and hillside scenery, this ride is for you. *Rider's tip:* This is a popular motorcycle destination, but the traffic on the Loop can be very stop and go. The road

has narrow bridges and some cars navigate these with extreme caution. As a result, the traffic can back up quite a bit. The flowers attract photographers, and rightly so, but certain areas are prone to sudden stops in traffic flow as the shutterbugs clamber out of their cars for a few choice shots. The area has loose livestock and this is much more of a hazard to a rider than a driver. Today's ride really showed the size of Texas as both the flora and the fauna exhibited changes as we headed west. We entered west Texas and were treated to open vistas as well as strange animals to Easterners. Here I am talking about the sight of antelope grazing in fields beside the road. Several striking examples of Impala and Texas Pronghorn antelope could be seen from behind the windscreens. The last stretch of road into Sonora was ridden on I-10 and a very strange sight was presented to us and we drove west. I am, of course, speaking of the famous 80 mph Texas speed limits in the western part of the state. This was truly a sight to behold.

We continued into the west and were treated to some genuinely striking canyon roads and views. *Rider's Tip:* The Texas canyons offer some spectacular views, but care must be taken to avoid the buzzards. I don't know if the area is particularly amenable to this type of bird, or if the area is carrion rich, but they seem to thrive here. As far as a rider is concerned, there are two types of buzzards; one that flies away from its in-road snack at the sight of you, and another that doesn't fly away until you are right on top of it. We had a close call with the front riders when a buzzard waited a little too long to get going and caused a few frantic pulls on the front brake levers to avoid running into it.

I had heard from several well-meaning colleagues that west Texas was not the most enjoyable place to ride, but I found the landscape to be mesmerizing. The open roads, lack of any real traffic and sense of isolation from the rest of the world was intoxicating. I don't know that I would enjoy a mechanical issue out there, but as long as the bike is running, the ride is first class.

We played the tourist and stopped at the Judge Roy Bean Museum in Langtry, TX. Old Roy is a story unto himself, but the museum is very well done and offers some well-executed restorations of the famous layman's saloon/town hall/billiard room and "Opera House". We ran into a group of Harley riders out of Houston that was also headed to Big Bend. A quick and friendly discussion with them proved that there were some big

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differences between the BMW and Harley touring riders. The obvious difference is the relatively shorter distance for Houston group, but the big difference was their use of a chase vehicle with a trailer. The chase vehicle offers out-of-the-wind comfort for pillion riders and a trailer in the event that someone breaks down. They seemed rather surprised that we had traveled all the way from the Atlantic Coast without similar resources, but I am not personally aware of BMW riders that travel this way.



The most important news of the day was that we reached our destination: Big Bend National Park. We had reservations in the park at the Chisos Mountains Lodge. *Traveler's Tip:* You need a reservation. Don't show up and expect to find a room when in-season. You might get away with it in the summer when the heat drives many people away, but in the spring, forget it. The lodge is located in the Chisos Mountains Basin, an area surrounded by mountains that rise from the desert floor. The basin is home to many desert and mountain creatures, including deer, snakes, lizards, javelina, mountain lions, and bears. In fact, shortly after we arrived in the evening, a group of wild javelina were grazing on the lodge grounds. While these pig-like



animals appear very docile, they spook easily and easily hurt you if you get in their way. They have very poor eyesight and literally can't see you if you get in the way.

Regarding the view from the lodge, I really can't find the right adjectives to adequately describe it. I just say, simply stunning, and leave it at that. During that first night, I went outside to see what the park offered and found a striking starscape unhindered by light pollution, and a profound quiet that bordered on unsettling.



Day six was the only day that we did not ride. James, Don, and Denny II took to the trails and traversed the Window Overlook trail to the edge of the basin. It did not take long to leave civilization behind and walk into the wild. The constant warning signs about mountain lions, bears, and what to do if they were encountered did little to dispel this feeling of being separated from the rest of humanity. The trail was five miles long and took us about three hours to complete. We didn't run into any carnivores, but we did encounter three mountain deer along the trail and very close.



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The next day, we were back on the bikes and began touring the park. The basin dominates the landscape and offers a striking view that made it very hard to stop turning around on the road to take it in. *Rider's Tip:* One member of our group encountered a javelina in the road during the morning. Earlier I mentioned that they have poor eyesight and are unpredictable. Take this into account and use caution when riding in the park. You cannot assume what they are going to do and it's best to slow down until they commit to a course of action on their own accord.



We had breakfast in the Roadrunner Deli in Study Butte. A little bit of dive, and a single proprietor establishment, but I can safely recommend the restaurant to any riders who find themselves in the slightly desolate town of Study Butte. A wonderful breakfast that put the lodge to shame.

We took a very scenic ride down the Farm to Market 170 road that runs through the Big Bend Ranch State Park and along the Rio Grande. Wonderful twisties and another dose of the wonderful country offered by the area. I now realize firsthand the problems facing the US Border Patrol in policing the area. There is just too much area to watch.



The evening was capped off by the highlight of the entire trip. Shortly after 6:00PM, the group gathered to visit the lodge restaurant for another dinner and bull session about past rides and exploits. We encountered a rather excited group of Harley riders peering into the woods a very short distance away. When we asked to the reasons for the feverishness, we were told that a mountain lion was in the woods and very close. After a short sprint into the hotel room to get my camera, I was on the road behind the room staring in wonder at the sight of a wild mountain lion in my viewfinder. He had trapped two deer on the hill below him and was watching them with extreme interest. As he peered down at his prey, he paid us no mind, although the crowd of fifteen or so was but a short distance away. The cat made the first move and closed the distance between himself and the deer to less than fifteen feet. At this point, the pair of deer countered by clambering



frantically into the street and dashing away to safety. No one was in the way, so the panic flight occurred without incident or a chase from the cat. Mr. mountain lion stayed his ground for several more minutes before stealthily disappearing into the brush. One particularly amusing facet to the encounter was watching a rider from another group walk up the curb alarming close to the cat and declare that the mountain lion was looking right at him. What an interesting reaction. Needless to say, we had a new topic of conversation over dinner as well as new appreciation for the mountain lion warnings that we had read tongue-in-cheek the day before.

The next day, our last full day in the park, saw us at the Rio Grande Village section of the park for an overlook of the Rio Grande from ground level. We found an interesting display by the river that included handcrafted wire scorpions along with a handwritten

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note and a jar of money. The note indicated that money for the merchandise was to be placed in the jar. Someone in the group postulated that Mexicans had left the merchandise and would retrieve the money later that night. I have since spoken of this matter with a neighbor who is a former Border Patrol agent and he verified our analysis of the situation and declared this quite common at tourist points along the river. Crossing the river is not nearly as difficult or dangerous as it might sound. The Rio Grande, despite its name, is not a very big river at this point. Several states pull water from the river and the desert heat takes its toll as well. At Big Bend, the river is no more than 20 feet wide and can be easily waded.



Our mountain lion pictures from the previous day made us minor celebrities for a time and several people dropped by for a look at them, including the park rangers. This was our last full day in the park and our last day as a group of six.



The next morning saw us break into separate groups for the trip back east. The North Carolina contingent left the park on April 22, for the three-day ride back home. We

decided to take the southerly I-10 route. Our first stop for gas was in Marathon, TX and breakfast at Johnny B's. This was our second visit to the restaurant as we had stopped in Marathon for lunch on the day we arrived in Big Bend. Johnny B's is a great place to stop to eat, but you can't be in a hurry. I-10 offered a different view of Texas, especially the big west Texas wind farms. Unfortunately for us, the route brought us into San Antonio during the evening rush hour and into Houston during the morning commute. It was a little surreal to leave the Chisos Mountains Lodge with deer freely wandering around in the parking lot and get stuck in San Antonio traffic in the same day. We spent the night in Schulenburg, TX at a Best Western. I mention the hotel because they were very motorcycle-friendly and accommodating. We were warned of rain the next day and the warnings proved to be correct. *Rider's Tip:* If you cross the Mississippi into Baton Rouge, the concrete pavement is very slick. We had first gear tire spin when we were stuck in traffic. If you are a gambler, you can reap one of the few benefits of hurricane Katrina. The devastation of the riverboat casinos tipped Louisiana's hand to allow on-land casinos in the southern part of the state and we saw the prototypical big casinos as well as the local gas station variety attached to the quick marts.

The skies opened up at the end of the day and we were forced off the road in Biloxi, MS, but not before we enjoyed the roadside views of the 10-mile swamps and Lake Biogeu with its cypress trees growing right out of the water.

The final stretch of road into North Carolina was spent primarily in the rain. We caught up with the same storm that we had seen in Biloxi, and rode in a downpour most of the day, but we put the miles away and made it home safe.

In the end, if you get a chance to go to Big Bend, take it. If you haven't been to west Texas and you want to see the diversity offered by the United States, I can highly recommend it. The place was simply spectacular and like no other place I have ever been. New Mexico is often mentioned when discussing desert landscapes, but while hiking in Big Bend, we encountered a woman on the trail who lived in New Mexico, but made several trips a year into Big Bend simply because she felt it was like no other place in the country. She claimed that few Texans know what is in their own backyard and that it was "The Texas Secret".

This is a secret that you will want in on.

Tarheel Traveler Calendar

07/03 - 1st Saturday Ride, 10:00 a.m. Gassed up and ready to ride at 10:00 a.m. Carolina Euro, 2407 Greengate Drive, Greensboro, NC (GPS N36 01.592 W79 48.083)

07/04 - TriadRiders 1st Sunday ride - 9:00 a.m. Gassed up and ready to ride at 9:00. Cheesecake by Alex, 315 South Elm Street, Greensboro, NC (GPS N36 04.195 W79 47.422)

07/11 - 2nd Sunday Ride - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. Gassed up and ready to ride at 10:00 a.m. Hardees, 28 East Rd, Pittsboro, NC (GPS N35 43.212 W79 10.603)

07/14 – 2nd Wednesday TT Dinner, 7:00 pm Shane's Rib Shack in Poyner Place (shopping behind Triangle Town Center). 5811 Poyner Village Pkwy, Raleigh, NC 27616-3376 (919) 850-9900 <http://shanesribshack.com/> (GPS N35 51.918 W78 34.214)

07/17 - Destination Ride - 9:00 a.m. Gassed up and ready to ride at 9:00 at the BP Station, 5016 Spring Forest Road, Raleigh, NC (GPS N35 51.359 W78 33.399) The ride is cancelled if it is raining.

07/18 - Monthly Meeting - 11:30 a.m. tire kicking, 1:00 pm meeting with lunch served afterward. Peter and Sandra Osta, 4816 Bluetick Road, Raleigh, NC 27616 (N35 50.779 W78 33.418)

07/21 - 3rd Wednesday Dinner - 6:30 p.m. Sammios, 2623 Raeford Rd., Fayetteville, NC 28303, 910- 321-0000

For additional event/rally dates be sure to check the TT website www.tarheelbmw.org

July 2010

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 1st Saturday Ride, Greensboro
4 TriadRiders 1st Sunday ride, Greensboro	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 2nd Sunday Ride, Pittsboro	12	13	14 2nd Wednes- day Dinner, Raleigh	15	16	17 Destination Ride, Raleigh
18 Monthly Meeting - Osta's, Raleigh	19	20	21 3rd Wednes- day Dinner - Fayetteville	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	28	30	31

The Meeting Place – Sunday July 18th 2010

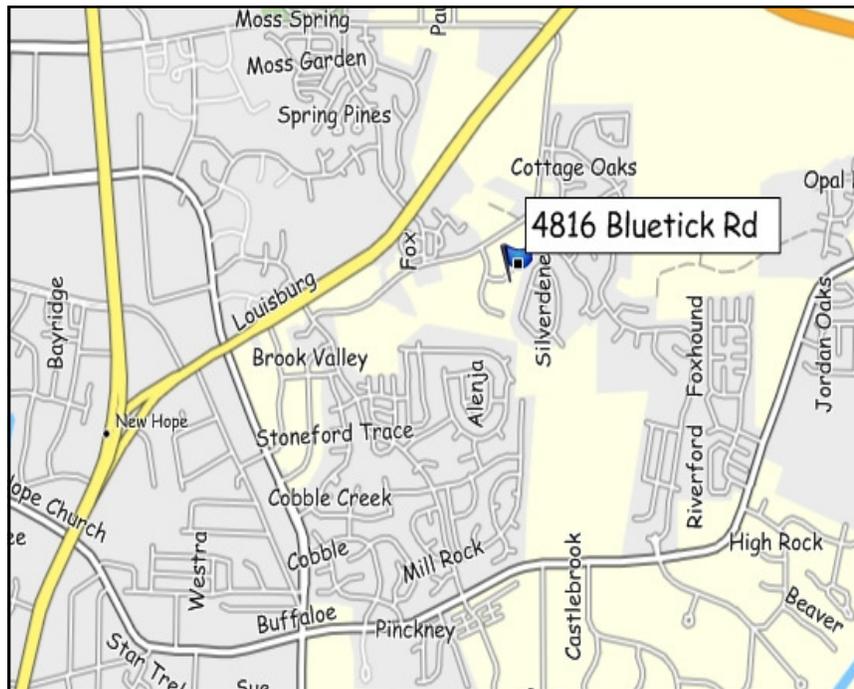
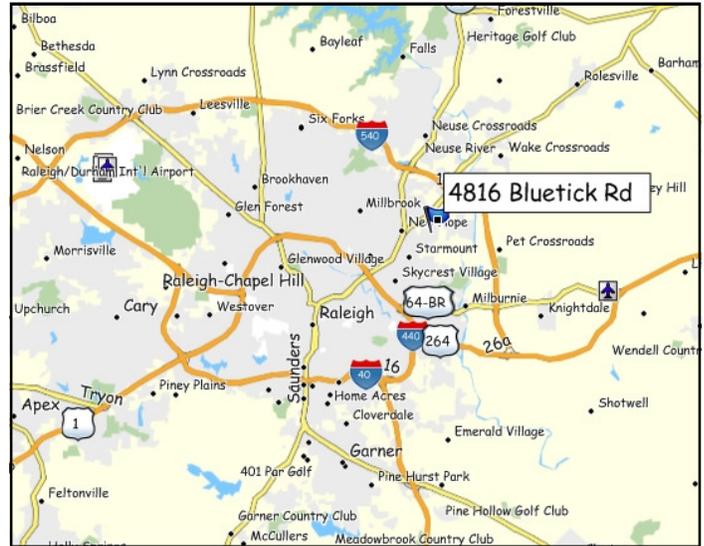
Peter and Sandra Osta
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N35 50.779 W78 33.418

From The South

From the south take 401 north. After the US1 split, turn right at the 3rd traffic light (Valley Stream). Turn left on Kyle Drive. Turn right on Leven Lane then left on Bluetick Rd.

From The West

From the west or east take I-540 to 401 South. Turn left at first traffic light (Spring Forest). Turn left on Leven Lane then left on Bluetick Rd.



2010 Meeting Hosts

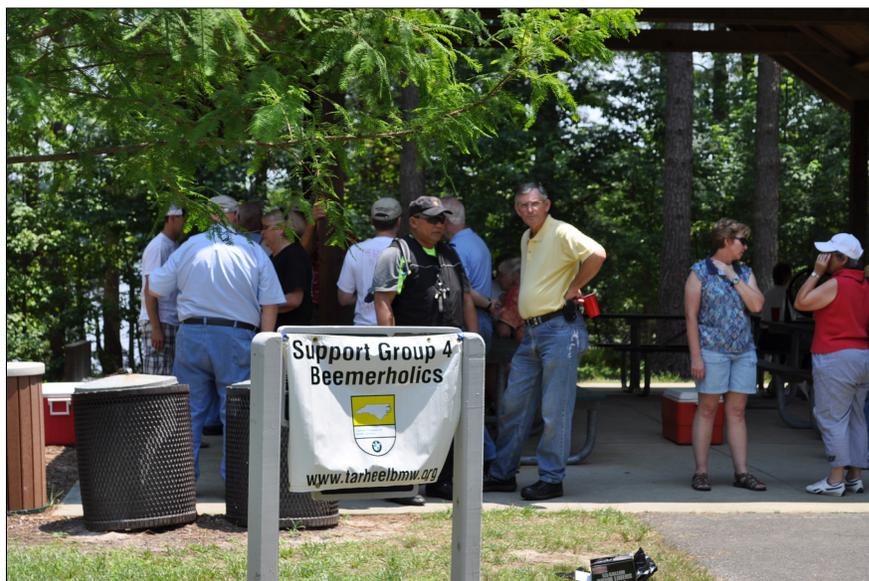
May: Gary and Tina Shimizu - Fayetteville	Sep: Joel Harris & Ed Gray - Raleigh
Jun: Annual Picnic - Harris Lake County Park	Oct: Steve & Belva - Fayetteville
Jul: Sandy & Pete Osta	Nov: Bombar's Beemers - Durham
Aug: Open	Dec: Al and Karol Jones - Fayetteville

2010 Tarheel Traveler Annual Picnic



The cooks and their assistants did a wonderful job of grilling up the burgers, sausage and hot dogs.

A good crowd showed up in the heat to relax and catch up with old friends.



Did someone say the food was ready?

Used BMW parts sources?

The front wheel rim of my 2004 R1150RT (5-spoke, silver) is dented (not so badly that it can't be dynamically balanced, and I've put quite a few miles on it without losing air, but it makes me a bit nervous and I'd like to replace it). So the question is, where to go for reliable use parts? Beemer Boneyard doesn't have any of this wheel available. Suggestions for other suppliers? Thanks!

vumbimoto

Re: Used BMW parts sources?

Here's the sources I used when I had a run in last year with a Ford Crown Vic:

Fred Rowland
Cycles Recycled
www.cyclesrecycled.com
4754 NC Hwy 18 South
Morganton, NC 28655

Mark Russo
Re-Psyche BMW Parts
www.re-psyche.com

Both sources were recommended on this list, and I give them my two thumbs up.

Jim

Re: Used BMW parts sources?

Here's another vote for Fred at Cycles Recycled. I got a part from him for less than half of new retail - but it needed some touching up.

There's also Beemer Bits -
http://www.beemerbits.com/catalog/about_us.php
But, keep in mind that these guys are usually dealing with parts from wrecked bikes - the wheels don't usually survive.

Have you considered getting the wheel straightened?
<http://www.woodyswheelworks.com/services.shtml>
<http://www.motorcycleframeman.com/wheel001.html>

<http://www.mcwheel.com/>
These are a few guys who work on motorcycle rims. I have not used any of them.

Michael

Re: Used BMW parts sources?

Thanks to all for your suggestions. Richard at Carolina Euro also recommended Fred, but he didn't have the wheel I need. Neither do others at the moment. Patience is indeed the key. Shipping it off

for straightening is certainly an option. The main problem is not wanting to give it up during prime riding season. Good excuse for keeping a second bike?

Maybe I'll do that next November or so. Or go on a vacation (where I can rent a bike) and have it done while I'm away.

vumbimoto

Re: Used BMW parts sources?

20/20 hind sight, I would not recommend used rim after my experience of the wrong bolt hole pattern followed by previous owner machining rim for other brakes plus wrong color. I spent more money buying that item used, powder coating rim and shimming for brakes than just buying a new one. Your mileage may vary.

Jim

Dealer Profile Articles for TT Newsletter

I would be interested in a 'profile' article, for the Tarheel Traveler Newsletter, about the Carolina Euro and/or Capitol BMW dealerships. Maybe an interview with the owner/manager, snap a few pictures of the showroom, service area, personnel. A little history of the dealership, number of employees, and how they're weathering the economy. For Euro, maybe some info on any impact on BMW sales and accessories while also carrying Triumph and Ducati brands. Be aware! Capitol BMW was not responsive to my requests. It could have been my Yankee attitude [what?] or dealers are wary of blabbing anything to local publishing. Maybe your approach would be more acceptable? Personally I thought positive dealer 'profile' articles would be good for business, but there may be issues from a dealers perspective I have not considered. Anyone? Anyone?

Marc

Re: Dealer Profile Articles for TT Newsletter

I've not had response from the owner of Capitol BMW and thought my Southern charm was failing...

Jim

Re: Dealer Profile Articles for TT Newsletter

Every month there is an article of a dealer in the MOA magazine so I don't know why either dealer would be non responsive.

Pete

The Market Place

2005 BMW R1200ST, Graphite & Sydney Blue, 27,500 miles. Accessories include BMW saddle bags with liners & luggage rack, ABS brakes, centerstand, Z-Technik smoked windshield (original clear windshield also included), BMW head guards, Chase Harper tank bag...\$9,900.00. E-mail wildvikingsouth@bellsouth.net or call (919) 274-0716.



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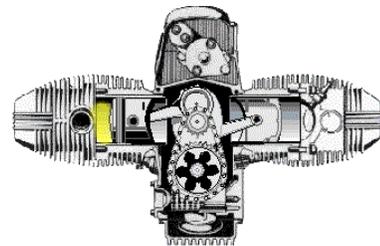
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Slam some words and pictures together and let me worry about copy editing and polishing. You'll be a star.

Send editorial copy to:

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Cary, NC 27511

Or email to:

Editor at TarheelBMW.org

Funny story - Great long trip - Everything went wrong trip - Unintended purchase - My first BMW - My last BMW - Road went right, I went left - How to repair it yourself - Dirt bike riding after retirement - GPS tips & techniques - Using maps to plan a bike trip - Sidecars are for wimps - Best roads in Idaho - Why I ride alone now.

2010 Meeting Host Needed !!

A host home for our monthly meeting is needed for **August** 2010.

Please consider hosting a meeting for one of our open months. See the chart of meeting dates to see which dates are open. If you don't feel able to do it alone, consider teaming up with another member to co-host. Or book a park shelter and have a stress free outdoor meeting. **We're flexible!**

The meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month. There are two hosting formats you can choose from 1) 11:30 a.m. tire kicking with the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and lunched served afterward and 2) 1:00 p.m. tire kicking followed by a 2:00 p.m. meeting with snacks served, not a full lunch. Your choice!

If you're interested, drop a line to the editor or one of our officers so we can get you on the list. Thanks to everyone who has graciously agreed to host.

**Tarheel Editor
C/o Marc Krouse
106 Beaver Pine Way
Cary, NC 27511**