



THE BEEMER READER

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Return to the Baja: Part 2

Part two
by Geoff Stevenson

Waikiki on the Sea of Cortez

San Jose del Cabo was a fascinating mix of the old Mexico and a new, mostly tourist-based economy. The timeshare was surrounded by golf courses and huge new hotels.

We might have been in Waikiki or on several beaches in Florida. But I reckoned those places would have been much busier; walking down the modern boulevard that housed six or seven new hotels, there seemed surprisingly little activity.

Jorgen talked to a merchant in Cabo; he was lamenting a lack of business. My guess is that the recession of 2008 is still affecting much of the Baja.



What did you think a bunch of grey hairs (or no hairs) would photograph in Ensenada?

San Jose had WalMart, Starbucks, Dairy Queen and the usual lineup of fast food joints. We also shopped in MEGA, a supermarket that was appropriately named: It was probably two or three times the size of a typical Victoria store.

4,000km on a 225

Jorgen and Ernie rode their V-Strom 650s. Dennis was on a BMW 650/800 and I took a Yamaha XT225 (I had planned to ride my V-Strom, too, but changed mounts when the V-Strom started acting up a week before we were due to leave).

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Next Breakfast/Brunch

Saturday, June 1



WHERE:

Cow Café & Cookhouse

54 North Shore Road,
Cowichan Bay

Time:

9:30 am



Fueling up before a day's adventure

Ralph Waldo Emerson defined friendship as “the masterpiece of nature.” I’d define it as having three good friends prepared to ride 4,000km in the Baja behind a guy trundling along at 90-95km/h - and less than that in strong headwinds (when he had to shift down to fifth and proceed at around 80 km/h).

I joke that the XT has a piece of plywood masquerading as a seat, so we stopped every 70km or so. This worked well for everyone, since it allowed three of us to take a drink of something cool (Jorgen was better organized with a Camelback).

All the bikes ran perfectly. We kept chains lubed and a watchful eye on tire pressures and oil levels. The Yamaha runs on tubed tires and I carried two spare tubes and tire irons, but fortunately needed neither.

Our only incident was simple pilot error. One of the group (he wants to remain anonymous, but there’s a rumor he was on the smallest bike) pulled into a Pemex station after a long, hard and hot day and began pumping.

He put about 7 litres into his almost-empty 10-litre tank when the attendant (who spoke no English) raced up to his pump, gesticulating and waving wildly. Our anonymous rider looked at the pump and then the awful truth dawned: He’d been pumping diesel.



Breakfast at the Hotel California in Todos Santos, made famous in an Eagles song. From left: Dennis, Ernie, Geoff and Jorgen.

This was no big problem. Indeed, the Pemex guys were ready for a klutz like this. Another attendant materialized with a siphon hose and the rider pushed his mount back perhaps 20 feet to a grate covering a drain.

The senior attendant not only stuffed the hose into the gas tank, he also did the hard work with his mouth and the gas-diesel mixture was soon flowing down through the grate.

Of course, siphoning fuel out of a tank is hardly an exact science, since you can never be sure you’ve got it all out. But this effort seemed to have worked pretty well and the tank appeared mostly empty.

So, the bike was advanced to the pump and the tank filled with gasoline. It fired right up (there

was, of course, only gasoline in the float bowl) and never missed a beat thereafter.

There was a tiny amount of exhaust smoke the next morning, but when the spark plug was examined back in Victoria, it was a normal brown-orange color.

(If you’re going to make this mistake, put diesel into a gasoline tank, not the reverse. Because oil in diesel fuel helps lubricate the injector pump, gasoline in a diesel tank will have the pump clattering in short order - and fry the pump and/or injectors soon after that).

All gasoline in Mexico is sold by Pemex, a state monopoly - and one of the biggest energy companies in the world. There are modern stations everywhere and gas is significantly cheaper than in



Mexico has boomed over the years

Canada: We paid 90 cents/litre for regular gas, 95 for premium.

An economic boom

Mexico has more than 110 million people, or about three times as many people as Canada. When I went there first in 1969, it was clearly part of the Third World. Those days are long gone.

It's benefited hugely from the North American Free Trade Agreement. (Most Americans would be surprised - and disheartened - to learn how many of the Big Three vehicles they buy are assembled in Mexico).

According to the Los Angeles Times, the country has had 15 years of sustained economic growth, with a 3% average annual increase in GDP per capita.

Average income has more than doubled since 1997 and is now comparable to Russia, Malaysia and Brazil; twice what it is in China, five times that of India.

And that leaky American border that so frustrates conservative American legislators has been mostly plugged. The budget of the US Border Patrol has increased almost tenfold in the past 20 years.

The result: Illegal southwest border crossings (into California and Arizona) have dropped to levels not seen in 40 years. Indeed, a quarter of the people trying to cross now are "Other than Mexicans,"

mostly Central Americans and a few immigrants from outside the hemisphere.

Most of the Mexican news we read (or watch) in the Canadian media involves the drug trade in mainland Mexico. At our age, we're hardly naive, but we saw no evidence of any kind of problems relating to the drug trade in the Baja. (No, we didn't go through Tijuana, for obvious reasons).

A half-acre flag

Ensenada is famous for its huge waterfront flag. We took turns guessing at how high the pole was - and how big the flag was.

Back home, Dennis researched the

subject, to discover that the then-president (Ernesto Zedillo) started a program in 1999 to put up giant flags across the country.

The decree stated that the first flags (including the one in Ensenada) were to be 14.3 metres by 25 metres. (Depending on where you live, that flag might be bigger than your lot).

They were to be raised on poles 50 metres high (roughly the height of a 15-storey building).

Then Mexico got serious about its flags. The biggest one currently is at the Gran Plaza across from the bridge connecting Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass, TX.



Another thing the tourists come for... a beach on the Sea of Cortez just south of Mulege.



Riding and relaxing filled the days



Another water break among the cacti. Those tall saguaro plants can grow to 70 feet.

It's hard to believe, but this flag measures 60 by 34 metres and weighs 420 kilograms. Its pole is 120 metres high and weighs 160 tons. No, I am not making this up.

A sign of the times

We did lots of reading on the trip. We finished riding most days in the early afternoon; this allowed us to get in an hour or two of relaxed reading before supper. Two of us had electronic readers, two were stuck with old-fashioned paperbacks.

Of course, having a reader means you never run out of material on a 3-week vacation. I, on the other hand, had soon finished the three books I'd brought and need to

replenish my supply.

By chance, there was a used bookstore around the corner from our palatial timeshare in San Jose del Cabo. It also sold used golf clubs, which I thought was an odd combination.

I went in one morning, chose some Clive Cussler and John Grisham and paid for the paperbacks (\$3.50 each, which was no bargain).

Intrigued, I asked the 50-ish American owner why he was also selling golf equipment.

"Ah," he sighed, "nobody buys books any more."

Sunshine and heat

We'd been a little worried

that getting to the Baja in late March might mean we'd have uncomfortably hot weather. This turned out to be an unfounded concern: In Ensenada, for heaven's sake, it was 10 degrees and foggy.

But, as we rode south, the temperature increased and we were soon enjoying sunny skies with the thermometer nearing 30.

Dennis and I spent 22 days on the road, which was just about perfect for a late winter break from the grey skies and cool temperatures of Victoria.

As we rode out of Ensenada with the sun rising on our way home, the lighthouse on the north end of Todos Santos Island winked a warm adios.

That seemed to mean "Come back soon" - and some of us are already thinking about a return engagement. For this trip we decided to ride the scenic route down Hwy 95 past Natural Bridges National Monument. Then 261 to Mexican Hat which takes you down the Moki Dugway. This road takes you to the top of a 3000 foot drop, to a right turn down with a 10% grade for 3 miles of gravel and switch backs. We stayed in Mexican Hat in a round, one room motel unit away from the others. The silence at night, the clear sky and a drink, it doesn't get any better. The next day we road into Page Arizona and a tour of the slot canyon called



Mexico urges "Come Back Soon"

Antelope. The next day it was head north up Hwy 89 and a left on Hwy 12 past the entrance to Bryce Canyon, which every one should visit at least once. At one place

on the this road, we went over a 9000 pass were the road was only 1 lane each way, no shoulder and about 1,000 to 2,000 feet down on each side. From here we carried on

home.

Note when we start out, we only have a turn around destination with time limits to be any where at any time.

Acoustic Blues Ride, August 1-4

by John S. Marczyk

It's back by popular demand. The Acoustic Blues Ride to Port Townsend will be held on August 1-4, 2013. Ride the twisty road up to Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park with us to see the flowering plants at 5,242 feet (1,5242 m) above sea level, awesome views, and to hike the many alpine tundra hiking trails. Ride the challenging coastal secondary roads west of Port Angeles to Neah Bay.

Time is running out. Inexpensive rooms will soon be gone. If you have been procrastinating about this ride, now is the time to decide if you wish to go. This deal ends June 1

Lodging for this summer's Acoustic Blues Ride will be in the historic Port Townsend downtown.

The Water Street Hotel, a turn of the century heritage ocean-front building, located foot steps away from the acoustic blues performances, restaurants, cafes and shopping. Several rooms have been reserved, with the majority booked a year in advance of the Acoustic Blues Festival, at the Water Street Hotel with per person accommodation rates ranging from:

- Room 16, with full kitchen and bathroom at \$145/night, plus \$10 each for persons #3 to 5. Designed to sleep five comfortably. Rate for five works out to \$35/night each!
- Room 19 with queen bed, kitchen and bath at \$130/night (\$65each for two occupants).
- Room 8A, queen bed, shared bath at \$65/night (\$32.50 each for two occupants).
- Room 9, queen bed, shared bath at \$70 (Booked).

Confirm your bookings with Mary

at the Water Street Hotel at (306) 385-5467. You will need to provide a credit card number at the time of booking. Cancellation policy is 48 hours before the check-in date. When booking please provide the group booking name "BMW Riders Vancouver Island."

A tentative itinerary for the Blues Ride includes:

Thursday, 1 August 2013: Sidney to Anacortes via Washington State Ferries. Ride from Anacortes to Port Townsend. Supper in historic Port Townsend downtown restaurant, with acoustic blues performances.

Friday, 2 August 2013: Ride to Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park and twisty coastal secondary roads west of Port Angeles to Neah Bay. Visit Neah Bay Museum. Acoustic blues performances in the evening.

Saturday, 3 August 2013: Acoustic Blues Main Stage performance at Fort Warden State Park. Shopping for fresh seafood supper with vintage wines at American prices!



Acoustic Blues Ride: Book Your Space Now

Sunday, 4 August 2013: Free day. Return early evening to Victoria via Blackball Ferries "Coho" from Port Angeles. Reservations mandatory due to small capacity and peak



Water Street Hotel

demand. Don't be disappointed, book your place on the ride as soon as possible with **John Marczyk** at 250 472-6903 specifying lodging preferences at the Water Street Hotel.

Please note that the Fort Warden Hostel, our lodgings for the Blues Ride 2011, closed its doors after decades of operation. While other hotel options exist in Port Townsend, room availability will be low for the August 1-4 weekend due to the Acoustic blues Festival. Rates may also be quite high for remaining

room inventory.

For more information:

Hurricane Ridge: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Ridge

Port Townsend Acoustic Blues Festival 2013: <http://centrum.org/port-townsend-acoustic-blues-festival-performances/>

Water Street Hotel: <http://www.waterstreethotelporttownsend.com/>

Olympic Peninsula: <http://www.olympicpeninsula.org/>

The Port Townsend

ACOUSTIC BLUES FESTIVAL

July 28-August 4

sponsored by
WILDER AUTO WESTAF



Led by Artistic Director Daryl Davis, (above right) Centrum's Acoustic Blues Festival is one of **America's finest blues experiences.**

2013 headliners include **Gaye Adegbalola, Dom Flemons, Boo Hanks, Jerron Paxton,** and many more! Mainstage shows at McCurdy Pavilion cap off a week-long workshop for nearly 250 passionate acoustic blues students taught by artists from across the country. **Club shows and a massive Saturday mainstage performances transform Port Townsend into the summer blues getaway.**



Club Event Schedule

Date	Event	Location	Comments
Fri, May 3, 2013	BMW Demo Ride	Island BMW	Test Rides
Sun, May 5, 2013	Monthly Gathering	Qualicum Memorial Golf Course	Breakfast
Sun, May 19, 2013	Monthly Ride	Saltaire Pub / Ladysmith	Lunch
May 23 to 27, 2013	49er Rally	Mariposa, California	Rally
Sat, June 1, 2013	Monthly Gathering	Cow Café & Cookhouse	Breakfast
Sat, June 8, 2013	Ride For Dad	Comox Valley	Charity
June 13 to 16, 2013	Chief Joseph Rally	John Day, Oregon	Rally
Sat & Sun, June 22 & 23, 2013	Ride & Camp <i>Route TBD</i>	Duffy Loop / Lillooet Sunshine Coast Hwy 20 Washington	<i>Where do we want to go?</i>
Sun, June 23, 2013	Motorcycle Ride to Live	Steve Drane's HD	Charity
June - <i>tentative</i>	19th Annual BCCOM MLA	Vancouver	
Sun, July 7, 2013	Monthly Gathering	TBD	Breakfast
July 12 to 14, 2013	Lunatic Fringe Rally	Cochrane, Alberta	Rally
July 18 to 21, 2013	BMWMOA National Rally	Salem , Oregon	Rally
Sat & Sun, July 13 & 14, 2013	Up Island Ride <i>Destination TBD</i>	Tofino Sayward Mount Washington	<i>Where do we want to go?</i>
Thurs to Sun, July 25 to 28, 2013	Cascade Country Rendezvous	Republic, Washington	Rally
Aug 1 to 4, 2013	Blues Fest	Port Townsend	Rally
Sat, Aug 3, 2013	Monthly Gathering	Salt Spring Island	Breakfast
Thurs to Sun, Aug 8 to 11, 2013	August 38 th Stanley Stomp Rally	Grandjean, ID	Rally
Aug 15 to 18, 2013	Hotsprings Rally	Nakusp, BC	Rally
Sun, Aug 25, 2013	Ride and BBQ	Cobble Hill	Party
Sept - <i>tentative</i>	Monthly Gathering	Pioneer House, Duncan	Breakfast
Sept - <i>tentative</i>	United Way Charity Ride	CFB Esquimalt (location TBD)	Charity
Sept - <i>tentative</i>	Monthly Ride	Port Renfrew / Cowichan loop	Lunch
Sept - <i>tentative</i>	29 th Annual "Oyster Run" Motorcycle Rally	Anacortes, WA	Rally
Oct - <i>tentative</i>	Monthly Gathering	Location TBD	Breakfast
Oct - <i>tentative</i>	Annual Meeting	Location TBD	AGM & Dinner
November - <i>tentative</i>	Monthly Gathering	Chequered Flag	Breakfast
December - <i>tentative</i>	Monthly Gathering	Chequered Flag	Breakfast
Jan 1, 2014	TROC	Island View Beach, Bob's House	Party