

Alan and Laurissa go west in 2021

We have been on many bike vacations and have been out west 6 or 7 times, but this time is different. I am retired and this trip was **not** going to be limited by just 10 or so days of vacation. In fact we made some guidelines that others may find helpful in keeping themselves fresh on road trips. We wanted to limit the miles to about 400 a day and after 3 days of riding we would take a down day. We also made reservations because at times rooms can be hard to find. LET'S GO.

Day 1:

Thursday June 17, we headed out to Galveston, TX and about 450 miles.

The day started out at a fantastic 65 degrees and we followed the pot holed filled backroads from Madison to Edwards and Old Port Gibson Road and then crossed the river at Natchez. In Ferriday LA, traffic came to a standstill due to a wreck and then the cops closed the road and started turning around traffic. However, with a few off-road maneuvers and a short dirt road we lost very little time getting back on track. We rode through Frogmore on the way to lunch in Alexandria. On this trip we wanted to skip fast food and hit local places. We found a place called the Red Kettle that has great plate lunches. After lunch we headed to Lake Charles, Port Arthur and Galveston. Along the way I missed my turn and we were on a very bad deserted road. I was not lost but decided I better check the map. It was now 96 degrees and we parked the bike and got under a shade tree. Can you say holy S---t! the road was asphalt and my kickstand broke through. Dirt nap!! Fully loaded this bike was heavy but luck was on our side as a fisherman just happened to come by and help me get it up. THANKS. We got our bearings and headed out. The Ferry across the bay was fun but the 45 minute wait was not and can you say hot. Galveston was very nice and so was the food.



Day 2:

On to Del Rio and South Texas with long lonely roads and heat. The ride today was 535 miles, however the speed limit is 80 on these deserted roads so we made great time. Not much to report except the winds were so high that they were blowing trucks off the road. Oh and cops and more cops and even more border patrol. We went through Carrizo Springs where Health and Human Services has a center with over 1,000 beds for unaccompanied children. There were several border patrol check points that we had to stop at. We got to watch a power company helicopter with a worker hanging from the skids on a harness working on some power lines, cool.

Day 3:

More of the same on the way to El Paso, We would go 30-45 minutes without seeing any other vehicles and signs saying no services for 88 miles, 50 miles and so forth. On HWY 90 west of Alpine TX we saw this small blimp about 1,000 feet up. A google search informed us this was an ICE "TARRS" radar system blimp used to search and track small planes from Mexico smuggling drugs and other.



We did go through Marathon and the turn off to Big Bend. We have been here before so no need to stop. Dan and Bill had recommended the Judge Roy Bean Museum but it was closed. The temp today pegged out at 110 outside El Paso and we rode 450 miles. With no traffic and the liberal speed limits we made great time. In fact with only 1 stop we had a late 2:00 pm lunch in El Paso at this absolutely crazy restaurant called the melting pot. WHAT THE HECK!!!! Laurissa made the call and it was a BAD one. We also got to experience our first restaurant with 1 restroom open to all. El Paso is much bigger than I expected with a very rich Hispanic heritage. Saturday afternoon Mass was at a very small Hispanic community church where we sure got the looks as we backed into the small parking space on the street right at the front door. This church service was a highlight of the trip. We were welcomed with many smiles and the music was great, 3 guitars and 1 flute. They had a mask mandate and it was funny watching her play the flute through 2 masks, yes she had on 2. Finished the day with a monster steak at the Cattle Baron.

Day 4: On to Alpine, AZ

Today we left the straight roads behind and it was going to be a short 350 mile day. Something was wrong. My GPS said it was going to be 9 hours? We started the day off with something that I NEVER do, a less than full tank of fuel but the fuel range still said I had 250 miles. I knew that my turn off 50 miles down the road would have fuel so I was ok. Wrong, no fuel or convenience store. Still not a problem but not long after the turn off I had an urgent call from mother nature. There was nothing but cactus along the road and they were the small ones. There was no traffic so I was able to finish my business with no one watching but the sun. This really was where the fun began because the road turned a "little" twisty and really good riding!



NM was still on covid lockdown so there were no sit down restaurants open so fast food and a shade tree was the only choice at Silver City for lunch. We go through Mule Creek and plan on crossing the mountains on Hwy 191. As we turn off on 191 and go through Morenci it turns into Bizarro World. We are now smack dab in the middle of one of the US's largest working copper mines and they were working, it was strange. The wind was blowing the dust making it hard to ride and to see. It was surreal going through this place and as soon as we rode through it we discover why this 350 mile day was pegged at 9 hours.



This section of Hwy 191 is 90 miles of 15 and 20 mph switchbacks. (Google Maps says the time to cover this 90 miles would be 2 hours 27 minutes) And did I mention the high winds!!!!!!! WOW. As we climb the mountain getting to within 30 miles of Alpine there is a sign that says road closed 11 miles ahead. Hoping that it was wrong we kept on going. Well we were the ones that were wrong. The road was closed due to a monster wild fire and 2 forestry service people were guarding the road. Just 20 or so miles from Alpine we had to turn around and make a detour. This added almost 175 miles to our "short" day. Somehow going down the mountain was much faster but we did have to fuel up before taking another super fantastic HWY 180 on up to Alpine. Dark clouds had been forming to our left but we were almost there. As we were admiring a large herd of elk the storm hit. We could see the town but just barely because the dust and rain was very heavy. As we pulled into the parking lot of the motel we heard a large boom and the lights for the entire town went out. Not to worry because the owner came

running out of the office with his arms full of lanterns and passed them out. We got checked in then headed to the local bar and grill that just happened to have a generator and was open for business. It was a mad house and packed. Great burger, fries and beer to end a long day and one for the books. Today ended with well over 500 miles and 12 & 1/2 hours.



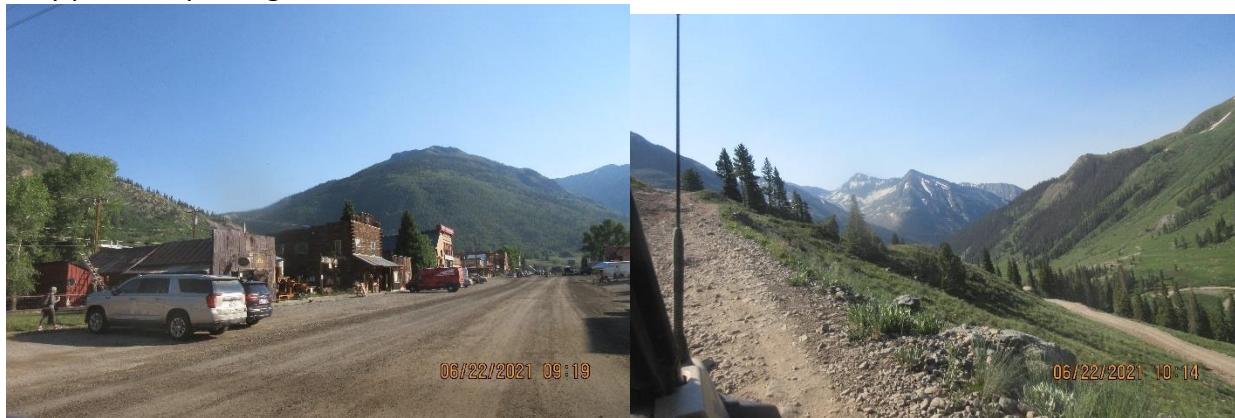
Day 5:

It was about 450 easy miles that took us to Silverton CO and that would be our first down day. As soon as we left Alpine we noticed the drastic change in the land scape and why so many people that we visited with in the bar the night before loved it here. We now started to see grass and lots more green vegetation than before. In fact this part of town was beautiful. The weather also changed and today started out at 55 degrees and was cold. We also saw more deer and elk and those little animals that look like super sized squirrels. After getting Ice cream in Durango we hit Hwy 550 and on to Silverton. We stayed at a crappy looking motel that actually turned out to be great. What made it great was parking the bike at the front door and the chairs out front that allowed the many SxS riders to shoot the breeze. We made many new friends and shared good places to go ride.

Day 6:

Silverton is a VERY small town with only one paved road and several dirt streets. 1 way in and 1 way out unless you had an off road vehicle and like driving or riding rocky mountain trails aka the Alpine Loop to Lake City. This town was somewhat sad because covid had decimated it. The only business's that were open were on main street and that consisted of 2 motels, 2 restaurants, a few gift shops the general store and the ATV rental place. The place was packed

with tourist and every business was booming. The problem was no workers. The crappy looking motel that we stayed at actually turned out to be a great place. The next day, our down day, we had a Polaris SxS rented to ride the Alpine loop. They had packed us a lunch and it came with a GPS and spot tracker with an emergency button. This was that rocky mountain trail that was about 80 miles and went to Lake City and then looped back. There were also several little side trips you could take along the way. There was lots of ice and snow and even though the trails were 2 way, there were many places that only very careful driving would keep you safe. I met a jeep in one of these areas and the jeep was almost at a 60 degree angle with his tires up the side of the mountain, my fender flairs rubbing his paint and my right hand tire were less than 6 inches from the side. A white knuckle event. The highest elevation was 12,800 feet and the general store even sold shots of bottled oxygen. They had small, medium and large. After a really good day we finished up with good BBQ, story telling and drinking beer with new friends in the parking lot by the front door. Ask about the two KTM dudes with matching brand new bikes and orange KTM, Klim gear. They looked like models on a photo shoot. They were pissed that the last 2 rooms were \$200 each. We all laughed when I told them if they took that new orange gear off they could get them for the same price that we had paid, \$100. For real but they ponied up and gave the \$200 each.





Day 7:

And here we come Breckenridge.

This was another very uneventful day with easy riding. To start out the day we hit Hwy 550 to Ouray also known as the Million Dollar Highway. It was awesome to say the least, but after just 2 miles we had a 30 minute delay for timber removal. They had cut some trees down in the valley and were using a helicopter to lift and carry them to the other side of the road. Then back on our way. I had planned some great roads but after about 20 miles there was one of those digital signs on wheels saying that 5 miles ahead only 120 cars per every 2 hours were allowed. There was a road crew just ahead and they confirmed that due to road construction traffic was limited.

Breckenridge was going to be 1 & ½ days of doing nothing so Laurissa had found a FANTASTIC condo that even had a heated garage for the bike! As we walked the tourist trap town we sure did notice the thin air. We had some good food and just rested up.



Day 9:

On to Rawling WY and the riding was great with lots of great roads and small interesting towns. Nothing but the good riding. We did encounter some light rain but missed the real storm to the southwest with high winds, thunder and the rain was orange on the radar.

Day 10, 11 and 12 was Cody WY and this was our turn around point. The trip to Cody was only going to be about 300 miles and it started out at 49 degrees and was cold on the bike. Even though may locals told me about a 50 mile shortcut I stayed on the back roads. We went through the Wind River Reservation and there is a reason why it is named Wind River.



I have been in lots of high wind before but this was unbelievable as we went through the mountain valley. The road followed a river and there was a train track on the other side that had a long train. The train track as well as the highway went through many tunnels as we carved our way through the twisty road, cool ride. We made it to Cody and ate lunch at Granny's. We checked in and decided to go to the rodeo. Supper at our new favorite place, Granny's, and then caught the rodeo shuttle. Cody Has a Rodeo every night during the summer and it was very good.

The next day, Saturday, we spent the entire long day at the Cody wild west museum, It was actually 5 museums and we could have made it into a 2 day visit but we did not.

Sunday we walked the town and did the site seeing thing and then finished the day eating at the Wild Bills Erma Hotel Buffet , named after Wild Bill's daughter. It was packed and featured great prime rib.

Tuesday and Day 13: - Headed home



It was time to head back and our destination was Deadwood. We hit the back roads that were supposed to be good, but road construction and lots of it messed that up. Much of the ride was single lane with an escort and the road surface being prepped for resurface. One section, several miles long was actually dirt. We rode spearfish canyon and it was great riding but TONS of traffic. We made it to Deadwood for the night.



Day 14:

And our destination was going to be Sioux City, Iowa. Let me tell you, with the speed limit at 75 and with light traffic the miles flew by.

Day 15:

And on to our next stop in Springdale AR. Today the interstate was “owned” by Mississippi State fans after their big win and boy were they all on a high. We gave them the thumbs up and they returned it. The afternoon was supposed to be nothing but heavy rain but somehow we did not get 1 drop on us. There was rain in all directions, the road was wet and the fields were flooded but the rain would stop and let us by and then it would start back up behind us, strange. I had put my rain gear on but Laurissa kept the faith and we stayed dry.

Day 16:

And it was the last day. Nothing here to talk about only that once again rain was in the forecast. Today we did get about 15 minutes of very light rain and we were greeted by almost knee high grass when we pulled up to the house. A very good trip of 5054 miles.