

Rockies MC Tour 2012 consisted of 5 bikers, Nils, Flemming, Aage, Erik Aa & Erik N.

Aage who had been riding on several tours throughout this same area took the lead in planning for this tour, and he came out with flying colors.

The ride started on June 4th 2012 and ended June 14th.

We added up a total of 3.300 kilometers and visited a total of 6 US states ; Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Utah.

Many things can be said about Americans in general, however one thing cannot be disputed – almost without exceptions, they are open minded, cheerful and always willing to assist and accommodate particularly foreign bikers.



Where ever we ran into the locals, be that at a gas station, Wal Mart, restaurants or asking for driving directions – always full of smiles and a good comment.

For a biker, the roads are of high quality, be that mountain climbs or other back roads, for the most part they are well maintained, nicely curved and a joy for an MC rider.

Nils, Flemming and Erik N met up at Reykjavik, Iceland during the weekend leading up to the ride through the Rockies.

Weather wise we hit it right on target, we experienced 20 C whilst floating around in the Blue Lagoon, temperatures unheard of (average for June 13 C) and the good luck on the weather front it appeared would follow us throughout the entire bike tour.

Either by co-incident or pure luck, still, the 5 boys all met up around the same timing at Denver airport during the evening hours of June 3rd – originating from different embarkation points.

The anxiety and excitement could not be hidden – all looking forward to the next days and weeks like small school kids.

Only 50 yards across from our Aurora hotel was the ‘Mile High Motorcycle Rental’ shop.

It was all professionally arranged, the 5 bikes were lined up outside the dealer at 0930 hrs – paperwork was completed in record time and we hit the road 1030 hrs.



DAY 1 ; Denver, CO to Rapid City, SD – Total 642 Kms

This ended up being a very looong day on our Harleys.

We reached Rapid City only 2020 hrs and we were all very exhausted, and that's an understatement.

For the most part, we were riding north into the state of Wyoming, typical prairie terrain like we have seen it on the wild west movies during our youth.

It was clear that farmers in this part of the country are not the highest earners, farms as well as small towns and villages appeared warned down and so was the case also with Cheyenne where we stopped over for lunch.

Despite being both hungry and exhausted, we





Despite being both hungry and exhausted, we did not skip traditions with beer and Jack Daniels immediately after arrival at Rapid City.

As it was already getting late, we decided to dine at the in-house steak house (Best Western) where surprisingly, the steaks were of top quality.

Despite heavy jet lag, sleeping pills were not required, a long day on the bike made us fall asleep in an instant.

DAY 2 ; Black Hills and surrounding area – Total 173 kms

This was supposed to be a rest day but ended up as a great day on the bike as we toured the Black Hills area – fantastic landscape.

We started off with a visit to the Mount Rushmore National Memorial which features 18 meters sculptures of 4 former US Presidents carved into the granite face of Mount Rushmore. The 4 Presidents are : George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

The carving job took 5 years to complete and was finalized in 1939.

The National Memorial received more than 15 million visitors in 2011 so it's clearly popular with Americans in particular.

The boys continued the sightseeing tour to the Crazy Horse Memorial.

The monument is still in the making and when finally completed, will be carved out – 195 meters wide and 172 meters high – monument of Crazy Horse, the famous Indian chief.

The work on this monument was started in 1948 and is still far from completed however mightily impressive as it appeared.

There's a fascinating story behind this monument – the Ziolkowski family has taken on this enormous task basically on their own private initiative.

They have numerous times been offered governmental grants but continue to refuse. Mr Ziolkowski (Ukrainian origin) died in 1982 but his wife and 7 of his 10 kids have dedicated their lives to this project and are full time workers.

I doubt it will be completed in the lifetime of the riders of our gang.

This area is truly full of history from the ancient times when the Indians ruled America, names as Sitting Bull, Sioux tribes, General Custer to mention a few are all familiar names.

A truly enjoyable and relaxing day ended with a typical American restaurant visit for dinner – TGIF – although after the traditional JD & beers, although this time we met in the bar and the JD had been swapped with martinis, still with the same calming effect on mind and soul.





DAY 3 ; Rapid City to Sheridan, Wyoming – Total 263 kms

We decided to start early, already at 0800 hrs the Harleys were fired up, this with the exception of Nils' Road King, a push and run and the cylinders again were cooperative.

Another beautiful day as we left Rapid City – as we were heading west into Wyoming, we could scout the dark clouds tilting into the Black Hills.

This was not the first time or day we were running one day ahead of the bad weather – we're all borne under a lucky star it appeared ...

Again we enjoyed the splendid roads which allowed us to view the nature as we headed west, this after detouring the Black Hills are yet again.

Next on the agenda was a call into the famous little town of Sturgis.

Only one of the riders is a truly passionate Harley guy, Erik Aa, still it was interesting to see and experience this tiny little village which during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally which is being hosted annually in August each year. It's basically one main street with a couple of diners and bars.

It's beyond imagination how the place could cope with 650.000 bikes/bikers during last year's 10 days rally but apparently it worked.

The first rally was held in 1938 and it has since become the Mecca for Harley riders.



Oooh sure honey; Dorothy and I love to meet you for a few drinks tonight... thanks for asking.



From Sturgis we moved on to the spectacular Devils Tower National Monument. It rises 286 meters above the surrounding terrain.



Apparently this amazing volcanic rock was created during the Triassic geological period approximately 200 million years ago.

Due to our fairly lengthy stopovers, we arrived fairly late at Sheridan, WY, a typical American small town with 17,000 inhabitants living off farming and coal mining.

We dined in the in house restaurant, this following the Jack's and beer in the hotel bar – average meal, nothing much to be remembered.

DAY 4 ; Sheridan, WY to West Yellowstone, Montana – Total 506 kms

We had a long ride ahead of us and we decided yet again to start early, the jetlag made us all wake up quite early in any event.

We hit the road at 8am sharp.

On beforehand, expectations for this ride were already high, and we were not disappointed.

We experienced probably the most spectacular nature America can offer – just breathtaking !!!

Quite quickly we entered into Bighorn National Forest and continued to Cody which is on the doorsteps of Yellowstone National Park.

After a good sandwich lunch in Cody we were ready and prepared for Yellowstone, but as one of the riders were overly eager, it took us a while to get 'the ducks in a row' again.

We decided to make a detour into the park via Chief Joseph Scenic Highway – Route 296.

It's hard to describe nature's beauty by words, photos can help a bit but it must be experienced with own eyesight, truly spectacular it was.

We then strayed briefly north into Montana before we came back into Wyoming at Silver Gate and at last crossing into West Yellowstone, Montana where we stayed over at yet another Best Western.

The ride was indeed long but we also allowed ourselves plenty of time for good photo shots, we arrived only 2030 hrs, quite exhausted it must be added.

And as with the previous days, yet another day with the most splendid weather.

Actually West Yellowstone was a charming little town with a population of only 2000 people clearly living chiefly off tourism.













DAY 5 ; West Yellowstone, Montana to Jackson Hole, Wyoming – Total 210 kms

The weather forecast for this day was not promising but again 'we beat the weather'. We delayed the departure in view of a rather short ride.

This allowed the boys to wander around this charming little town and stocked up some warmer clothes as we prepared for higher altitudes in the Rockies.

We headed south through Yellowstone and again with one spectacular scenery following the other – I'm running short of superlatives ...

Jackson Hole is one of the most famous winter resorts in USA and particularly renown for it's powder snow.

JH appeared to be, similar to West Yellowstone, a picturesque and charming town, nice buildings and bubbling of life, even in the early part of June.

Captain America had scheduled a rest day here and that was indeed very proper, it was also a very decent hotel. Not surprisingly we ended up in a down town bar, on a outdoor terrace overlooking Main Street, actually as early as 4pm.

This had obvious consequences as the evening and night went on non-stop, at least for some of the boys until 2am the next morning, details shall however not be released.

The mix of splendid sunshine, nice drinks and friendly Americans made this one of the memorable evenings.

We met 2 charming Ohio girls, both of who had been educated and now performed as 'Hypno Therapists'.

Nils volunteered and quickly got into trance.

It might not have had long term effect on him but at least that evening he remained very calm and accommodating.

Food wise, this was the peak. A very cozy French style restaurant serving amongst other exciting dishes fresh Alaskan Red Sockeye – a real treat.

All in all, this ended up being a top day from A to Z.





Grand Tetons, Wyoming

DAY 6 ; Resting in Jackson Hole

Most of the boys, I think actually all of them, had hangovers from the previous day.

None touched the bikes; some took massage and otherwise just moved around town to recharge batteries.

We finished the evening with a lovely Japanese meal, Ramen for some but for the most part sashimi, sushi and tempura. Another great meal.

Weather forecast for the next day was anything but promising – the weather man predicted snow !!!





DAY 7 ; Jackson Hole, Wyoming to Park City, Utah - Total 409 kms

We delayed the departure hoping that the snowing would be behind us.

Unfortunately, we had light snow and hail for the initial 2 hours of our ride as we headed to Park City.

And needless to say, it was cold, very cold, just around 0 C.

Some were better equipped than others it should be added.

In any event, after 2 hours, the sun came to our rescue and whilst still rather cold, it was a nice ride through interesting landscapes with it's rolling hills, mainly through the state of Idaho with it's huge potato fields.

When you buy pommes frites in the US, you can be quite certain that the potatoes originate from Idaho.

About one third into the ride, for some strange reason, we ended up with 2 groups – with the 3 elderly riders left to find Park City on their own, it worked out well in the end.

Park City is situated about 30 kilometer east of Salt Lake City, and similarly to Jackson Hole, another famous ski resort.

It gained further recognition in 2002 when the city hosted a very successful winter Olympics.

For Norwegians in particular, it was a giant triumph as the country collected a record 13 gold medals and 25 medals in total, topping all other nations.

A typical Alp village, charming streets and buildings – and again we ended up having an excellent meal at an French/American bistro.

DAY 8 ; Park City, Utah to Aspen, Colorado – Total 576 kms

This was the second longest drive and we therefore decided to depart early, 8am.

Maybe needless to say it again but yet another fantastic day weather wise.

Scenery wise too, this day ended up competing with Day 4 running westbound into Yellowstone – ever changing landscapes, lakes and mountains, just leaving us speechless !!

The cameras were flashing constantly as we took time to enjoy nature, just in the middle of the Rockies.

Aspen, like the towns we had visited over the last few days, has a very solid reputation as a ski resort of high class.

It's an idyllic town with modern but still charming buildings and streets having a population of a tiny 7.000 people.

The elevation at Aspen is 2.450 meters and could be felt when walking.

Aspen is registered as the most expensive town in America for real estate – a typical condominium sells for averagely Usd 4,3 million.

After several days now with Japanese food, French food etc it was now time for some real juicy steaks – we hit probably the best steak house in town and the boys were indeed happy.

Given the fact that we had a long ride behind us and with late arrival at Aspen, the combination of big steaks and excellent red wine catered for skipping of Aspen night life.



DAY 9 ; Resting in Aspen

As was the case in Jackson Hole, none of the members touched their Harleys – it was indeed a nice and relaxing day strolling around the Aspen streets – in sunshine of course.





DAY 10 ; Aspen, Colorado to Estes Park, Colorado – Total 364 kms

I have run empty of superlatives – SPECTACULAR sceneries as we climbed high into peaks, then descended and climbed again.

We were over three passes with the highest as tall as 3.700 meters.

The enclosed photos will give a better impression than my words.

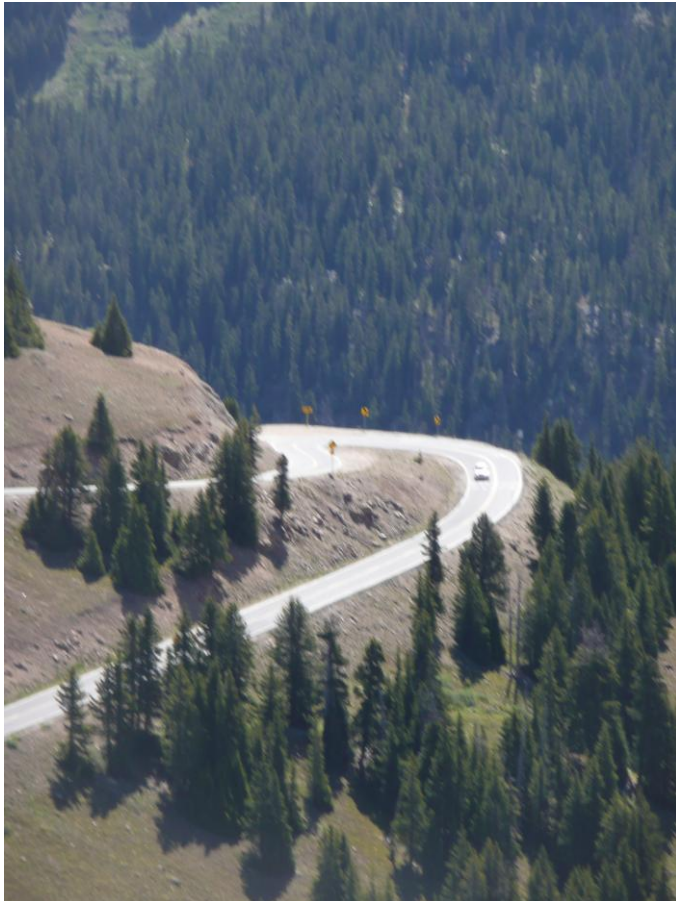
We stopped over in Leadville, a special little town which had thrived on lead mining. They had successfully conserved the old wild west building style.





It must be said that the ride upto and into Rocky Mountain National Park and further into Estes Park gave us a feeling of riding 'on top of the world'.

It was steep straight down the mountain side and no railings, not for the faint hearted.



Upon arriving at our Comfort Inn, we gathered outside on the patio and had a jolly good time with JD and beers before we headed off for Main Street and a good Italian restaurant.

Estes Park impressed us, quiet little town with a population of only 6.000 people all geared up for tourists visiting Rocky Mountain National Park, a place to remember.



DAY 11 ; Estes Park, Colorado – Denver, Colorado – Total 112 kms

This was our last day, a very short ride into Aurora where we would hand in our bikes.

We decided to take an easy morning and have breakfast at one of these hugely popular American diners.

Eggs, bacon, hash browns etc were consumed and we hit the road heading for Mile High Motorcycle Rentals.

We took one wrong turn on an exit but we quickly rectified the mistake and we could proudly ride into Mile High and redeliver the 5 Harley – no incident nor accident with any of the boys nor the bikes.

It was a huge sigh of relief from the bunch – 11 days touring the most spectacular sceneries of USA had come to an end, loaded with impressions which we all agreed would take time to digest and let it sink in.

We waved goodbye to the excellent staff at Mile High – a very effective, professional and not the least friendly bunch who we can strongly recommend for other bikers.

Such a successful trip deserved a nice farewell party, we therefore headed for downtown Denver and the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Dinner had been pre booked at the Elway Steak House – John Elway was one of the top quarterbacks in USA, playing 16 years with the Denver Broncos and winning the Super Bowl twice during the 1980's and 1990's. The quality of the food did not disappoint – great steaks !!





DAY 12 ; Denver waiting for the flight departures late afternoon.



At the very last – a big THANK YOU to Aage for a superb arrangement !!

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