

48 states in 8 days 12 hours 50 minutes equals countless meals of Balance bars, beef jerky, and dried fruit, over 80 stops for gas, living in a helmet for 15+ hours a day, and blisters/sores where you didn't know you could get them – all for the love of the road.

It started months ago with the planning. I worked out my route over and over trying to get the mileage down to what would be considered reasonable while still hitting all 48 continental states as required by the Iron Butt Associations rules for riding what is called a 48-10 or 48 states in 10 days ([www.ironbutt.com](http://www.ironbutt.com)). Even with all the planning two days before I was scheduled to leave a fluke snow storm hit Montana and the Dakota's right where I had planned to ride on my first day out, so the route changed quickly (I believe this led me to make some errors which cost me time later on).

On May 14, 2005 Ric and I loaded up the truck and headed out toward Montana. My original plan was to have him drop me in St Regis where I knew there was a hotel, but as we got into Montana we saw a hotel and casino just short of the Idaho border and stopped. My start point was now Haugan, Montana.

The ride over in the truck was uneventful other than my mind wandering to my trip and all that I would have to accomplish. Some inner voice was shouting "go go," but my true self knew I needed to save every ounce of energy and adrenaline for the ride so I kept calm.

Upon checking in Ric and I explained to the women at the front desk what I was about to do, they were shocked by my tale but were more than willing to sign my required witness forms. So with me ensconced in the room for the night, and my last meal already planned out, Ric gave me one last hug and headed back toward Seattle.

It was now up to me and only me to get this done. Over and over I had heard the disbelief in peoples voices, you are going to do what? This disbelief with the knowledge that not two weeks ago I had been in an accident and lost my original ride so was now riding a bike that though familiar had not yet been tested fully by any one in the way that I was about to test her (yes I decided on this ride it is definitely a her, just a strong willed her like a Rosie O'Donnell) compounded my concerns. You might have thought I was not concerned when I did these rides, you would be wrong, I am just as fearful as the next person the difference is I use the fear to be cautious but I don't allow it to hold me back.

So it was that on Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 2:48 am MT I start. This like any ride before (except the Iron Butt Rally) I will ride on my time, meaning I will not ride late into the night as I will listen closely to my body and allow it to wake and sleep on as normal a schedule for me as possible; I must be in top mental shape to make sure I do not fall victim to stupid mistakes.

I will now head due west toward Washington, picking up my required receipt in Lind. The weather this first day will be mild but drizzly for the most part until I get to Utah where the sun shines briefly and the temperatures raise slightly. It is dark but I am familiar with this road having traveled it many many times before, so the darkness does not bother me. There are few on the road now, just me and the truckers it will be this way most of the ride, but for me this is Zen as I am in awe of the truckers and how well they handle their rigs. It is not until I get to Lookout Pass that I experience that sense of true dread, the fog is so thick I must slow to second gear and inch along, hoping it is just low cloud cover and that it will be short lived, sure enough it clears quickly and I am once again flying along the road.

As I travel through Washington and into Oregon I remember how much I love these roads and hope to bring Ric back this way someday. I also dread each gas stop in Oregon as they are required by law to gas up for you, me I ignore them completely pretending I can't hear them with my helmet on and grab the nozzle before they can even move. This usually pisses them off but I can't stand the law it makes no sense at all to me! By the time I reach Idaho again I notice snow in the distance on the surrounding mountains, and get a little nervous about riding into Evanston,

Wyoming which is my scheduled stop for that states receipt. I will have to go through a small pass that has been difficult on me in the past either temperature wise or fog, but I am lucky as the temperatures have risen to about 65 and the pass is clear on this Sunday afternoon. I make my first rest stop easily at Coalville, Utah checking into a hotel for a few hours rest before heading out again.

Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> dawns and it is cold, below 40 and I am just outside Salt Lake City so I know the temps may actually dip further as I head south. I gear up well and head out. The mountain ranges I pass as I head south toward Nevada are glorious, last time I passed this way it had been dry for months so I did not realize how much greenery there actually was out this way and the color of the mountains is an even deeper red then I remembered probably due to the moisture of a very wet winter. This area of the country is beautiful in a different way then the Pacific Northwest, the red desert mountains offer an incredible glimpse at beauty in a dry clime, and I imagine this maybe what Mars looks like.

Outside Las Vegas I get in my mandatory stop at Henderson before heading south on 95 toward Needles, California the closest point inside the Nevada border I could find for gas in California. I take the time to gear down as the temperatures are now well into the 80's. I have not been on Route 95 before and am pleased to find though there is construction the traffic is moving right along and the whoopdies are a blast. A whoopdy is what I call a road that has little hills just big enough that when you hit them at speed your stomach temporarily moves up to your throat, these are better than any amusement park ride I can assure you!

As I arrive in Needles, I notice I am not quite feeling well. At the exit stop sign I put my foot down and the bike lists dangerously as the road is well pitted and I can't get a good grip, but I manage to keep her up and move forward toward the gas station. As I stop next to the pump the bike is now on an incline and though I put my left foot down there doesn't seem to be anything for me to grab and then the right foot drops in hopes of saving this fall, no such luck down the bike goes. I am lucky the bike has only minor scrapes and I am ok. With much begging and pleading I convince a large man to help me pick her up. I can't believe the man sat there, watched me fall over and didn't come over to help until I begged!

It is now I remember that this area is very dry and I am probably extremely dehydrated which has weakened me, normally I would have been able to save the bike, but not in this weakened state. So though I hate to do it I take a few extra minutes to get cold water at the store and to gear down more, every stop that I have to take extra time at means time lost for the ride which is very bad.

Finally back on the road I continue on, the wind now has picked up and I must fight it for almost 300 miles. My rest stop ends up at Gallup, New Mexico, I will have to say I will not be back, the hotel was horrible, the area was scary and there did not appear to be any reason in the world to be here (just my opinion).

My sleep has now started to change over to my ride schedule so I have noticed each morning I am getting up earlier and earlier. On Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> I am on the road by 2:00 am heading due east. I am not pleased with my last two days of riding distance but am unsure as to what I will encounter on this part of the trip, as I must scoot up into Colorado just for a brief second to get my mandatory receipt, then back down to the major roads again. I wake this morning tired from yesterday (probably due to the dehydration) and my stomach is upset with a slight case of nausea. This feeling is pretty typical for me on these rides, my body is working extremely hard for hours and hours without much rest and no matter how hard I train eventually I get to the point where I have to force myself to eat and drink though I feel as if I will loose everything I put into my mouth.

I notice today the wind has started to pick up, but it will not be until the last 300 miles that I am truly fighting what I will later find out are 30 mph sustained winds with 50 mph gusts. For now the riding is mostly flat and boring, until I get into the northern section of New Mexico where it borders

Colorado, then I am amazed at the glorious mountain vistas surrounding me and the great roads up into Trinidad, Colorado. I scoot in and out of Colorado quickly, thinking to myself that I made a good choice not to head up further into Colorado, which was my original plan, as the weather has just been horrible. For now I am in glorious sunshine with pretty high temperatures allowing me to make good time.

I hit the top of Texas where I get to enjoy Amarillo ever so briefly as the major road I am on dumps me right into the city. There are interesting horse sculptures everywhere, similar to our pigs on parade or the cows I think they had in Chicago, unfortunately I don't have time to really sightsee. Again I get lost trying to work my way through the city and have to recruit two men in a detail shop to get me back on track.

Ric would definitely enjoy Amarillo, everywhere I look there are offers of huge steaks at next to nothing pricing, this just makes me drool I am so sick of Balance bars, beef jerky and cold sandwiches from gas stations, but I don't have time to stop and enjoy I will just have to add this place to my list of must come back too's. It is fun to be riding through all the towns I know so well via the country music I listen to 24/7, this ride finds me however not listening to much as I am concentrating too much on what I need to do.

Finally I am in Oklahoma. I wanted to make it much further today than I do but the wind is more than I can bare and I am hoping it will die down for tomorrows ride. The wind has been so horrible I have lost one of my maps, it blew right off my tank bag; my tank bag released and hit me in the face; and as I was checking in the other women in the hotel office mentioned they didn't even want to be driving in what I had just ridden through! So it is at El Reno, Oklahoma I pull in for the night.

Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> if I had only known what a yucky day this was to be maybe I would have just stayed home. Without a detailed map of the area I was simply flying by the seat of my pants. I made it through Oklahoma, though I am not sure how as I got sufficiently lost at one point trying to find the back road down toward Texas, and am sure I went at least 20 miles out of my way to get back on track. I have a feeling the almost full moon was helping me on this trip especially on the dark back roads. The roads I was riding on were not well marked and very dark as they were simply small gray lines on the map I did have. I was very nervous about animals running into the road and was trying to keep my speeds down at least until the sun came up.

I finally reached Interstate 30 and started east toward Arkansas. I was desperately trying to find Texarkana to no avail all the signage was so messed up. I actually missed my exit heading east on I-30, turned around to come back and hit it going west only to realize too late that I missed it again as the westbound sign did not say Route 71 but the eastbound sign did. Loosing all patience I pulled into a gas station and flagged down two guys in a pick up to ask them if I was in Texas or Arkansas. In disbelief they said in unison, as if I had said a four letter word, "Texas!" I then explained what I was trying to do and could they tell me how to get in and out of Arkansas. The older gentleman immediately took pity on me and explained the fastest way to get my receipt in Texarkana, sure enough he was right on the mark – thank you again wherever you are!

After gassing up I realized I now needed to get to Louisiana but I had no idea where I really was. So I approached a man next to me in the station and asked him how I could get to Shreveport, he was extremely kind (even mentioned he liked my bike) and explained that I should just stay on Route 71 south, I would regret this as it was very slow going between the traffic, lowered speed limits and construction but without a good map of this area I had to stay where I was. By taking this route I did get to enjoy the small towns that I passed by with old homes and old trucks.

At one point I noticed a couple driving a rig with Washington plates, I got so excited I beeped politely and waved. I will not do this again as they were older and didn't understand that I was just waving to others from my state so far from home, instead they immediately pulled over thinking

there must be something wrong with their rig! I couldn't believe it I don't think I have ever felt so bad, but I was not in a position to turn around and explain so I just hoped they would forgive me.

So it was that somehow I made it through Louisiana, scooting around Lafayette via a back road that offered up the sweet southern smells of the bayou and flowers, more old pickups than a girl could dream of and glorious southern homes with big wrap around porches, into Mississippi where I stopped for the night just outside Biloxi in D'Iberville.

It is now Thursday, May 19th and my sleep schedule is really messed up I can't tell what time zone I am in and thus am up about 1 am. I ride into Florida ever so briefly before hitting a small gray line up into Alabama to start my long trek up the east coast. I know that this will most likely be the hardest part of my ride though the states are close together they are highly populated and traffic here is just horrible.

I manage to make it through Alabama without incident, though I can not for the life of me figure out the speed limit. My radar detector gave out on the second day (not sure if it is the unit or just an electrical issue) so I was keeping my speeds more than reasonable only to find I was getting all kinds of dirty looks, seems there are no cops in Georgia?

I wind my way through the Carolina's. These states I always find extremely pretty and am not disappointed again on this ride. Now I am riding in as of yet unexplored territory for me, Tennessee and into Kentucky. I can tell there is a storm coming in and fast, so want to get my riding done for the day before the weather gets too bad as the roads I am on are pretty windy and they are not familiar to me. I must say the Smoky Mountain Range is made for great riding. And I am very impressed by the scenery.

As I get close to Jenkins, Kentucky I get a little turned around and very frightened. There are ammunition shells at almost every stop and it is getting toward dark with a storm coming in, so I do something pretty foolish, as I have tried unsuccessfully to wave anyone down, stopping my bike in the middle of the road (not the freeway it is a back road). Finally a man stops and I ask how to get to Jenkins, seems the sign at the end of the exit ramp pointing in both directions was misleading and I needed to go back the way I came. I finally find the one gas station in town and fulfill the requirement of touching Kentucky. Though my original route had me staying on back roads for another 100 miles I am tired and not sure I can manage out here so late with a storm coming in so I head back 20 miles the way I came to a more major city with hotels Wise, Virginia is my next resting place.

The rain starts as I take the gear off the bike, perfect timing. As I sit in the hotel glued to weather channel I am only hoping beyond hope that the storm they are showing will pass overnight and it will be all clear for me to ride tomorrow.

I notice I keep waking, but it is not until I finally give up on sleep early Friday, May 20<sup>th</sup> that I notice the thunder and lightening outside. I turn on the weather channel to find a warning I have never seen before, severe thunderstorms with cloud to ground lightening high chance of fatality! So dumbfounded as to what I should do I continue watching as I eat a little something and figure that I am ok the storm seems to have moved along.

I gear up for a rainy ride and head out. 8 hours later I am soaked through, though my gear is water resistant it is I have just learned not waterproof or at least not made to go 8 hours in torrential down pours. I am truly upset I have only gone 500 or so miles due to the weather and the numerous times I have tried to change my gear to something dry. I decide I need to stop somewhere even if it is just for a few hours to try and dry my gear and re-group as to how to protect myself from this rain.

I find myself in Manassas, Virginia at an extremely disgusting Super 8. But I really only need a coin-laundry and a heater in the room. So I take full advantage of both, also taking the time to call

my parents and Ric to give them a heads up as to what is going on. Finally after I have dried my gear to simply a damp state I put it all back on and try to get further up the coast. I should have known this was a lost cause, as it is a rainy Friday on the east coast and I am just outside DC and Baltimore.

After four more hours on the road I have only made it 100 miles and give up. My stop for the night is Newark, Delaware just outside Wilmington. It is during these major slow downs that I have time to think, I started to count the states I had been in and the ones that were left, which made me wonder who decided which state would get which abbreviation. Think about it why is Mississippi MS not MI that is Michigan, and why is Alabama AL and Alaska AK? I also was wondering about speed limits, why in some states can you go 65 mph on a road that in other states you can only go 45 mph? And who decides about helmets? I couldn't believe how many states don't have helmet laws. This is just weird trivia that I come up with while out on these long rides.

Saturday and I rise kicking myself for giving up yesterday, my gear is still wet but it appears the weather is dry for the most part up the coast, so off I go. As I head up the freeway I notice that traffic is moving along and I am hoping to get through New York and even Boston before it picks up. Outside Trenton, New Jersey I thank my lucky stars that I am not headed the other way, I can't really tell what happened but there are at least 10 cop cars blocking the freeway, people everywhere and miles and miles of traffic backed up. It is so bad near the end of the back up people are literally driving backwards down the freeway to the previous off ramp!

It is about now that I notice my stomach has passed the point of no return and realize I must have gotten a bit of food poisoning, foolish me for not sticking with the heavy laden preservative food at the gas station and instead going for a locally made fresh sandwich last night. I have just passed the last travel plaza before the GW tunnel in New York so I panic! I notice I have one more chance to get off before the tunnel and take it praying I don't end up in some scary section of town all alone. I am lucky and quickly find a gas station with a bathroom! I have to say on this ride for the most part I got very lucky. In no time I am back on the road again.

I have a hard time finding gas in Connecticut, or I should say a station that is open, finally finding a 7-11 I buy a couple of candy bars, but the on and off driving I do trying to find something open so I can get a receipt wastes a lot of time. I worry when I get to Rhode Island I will have the same problem, but I get lucky and find gas quickly. I am so cold I stop in a McDonalds for a hot chocolate. Yes I said McD's this is my first time in over 15 years that I have bought anything at a McD's, but I needed a hot chocolate bad!

While at the McD's a girl and her dad start talking about my helmet and then the other dads in their group seemed interested so after wolfing down my hot chocolate I handed one of them my card and said check it out. He was kind enough to come out and ask me about my bike, on these rides though I don't have too much time for chit chat so I hope he reads this and realizes I am extremely happy that he took the time to ask!

Now I am winding my way up toward Boston, I am behind schedule, so I keep a running commentary in my head do I stop or don't I? The stop wins out and I swing into South Boston to ring my parents bell, telling them I only have 5 minutes, I don't even have time to take my helmet off which is probably for the best I have been on the road almost a week and I know only too well how bad I look.

Mom and Dad rush down we exchange ever so brief hugs and my dad confirms my understanding about how to get back on the freeway before I zoom off. I make my way quickly north, there has been construction all the way up this coast and at one point I hit such a drop off the bike bottomed out with a crash and I wondered if I had punched a hole in the exhaust. No time to worry about it now I will have to deal with it when I get home.

I get lost trying to find gas in Maine, I knew this would be a problem, for those of you who remember the first President Bush the press always joked you couldn't even find a bathroom in the town he vacationed in – I know for a fact they weren't joking as I tried to one day to find one too!

Finally after getting directions I have Maine covered and I head back across New Hampshire once again heading west. I had picked these roads for the lesser mileage, what I hadn't realized is that they are back roads fit for great riding but not for making good time! If you are ever on the east coast and want to take a leisurely ride try Route 4 to Route 9.

On this Saturday there had to be hundreds of bikes out on these great roads, but I was just losing patience having to slow down through every small town and the overall speed limit on the east is much less than the west so I was making pretty bad time. It was getting to the point that I was not sure I could do this ride in 8 days and now needed to seriously think about using the full 10, this idea made me really grumpy.

I end my day in Utica, New York tired and unhappy with the mileage done today and concerned I blew it.

I wake on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> determined to finish with a bang. So off I go due west quickly on major freeways. I have spent already upwards of \$30 on tolls and will by days end come close to \$60, don't you just love the east's freeway system. I manage to make great time through New York, Pennsylvania and into Ohio. Indiana is where I scoot off the beaten path to get my touch in Michigan. I arrive in Sturgis, Michigan at the gas stop and run in for my receipt. The guy behind the counter knows exactly why I am there turns out several others have been this way before for the same reason as me, so he quickly hands me my receipts and I am on the road again.

Somewhere between Ohio and Chicago at one of my gas stops a man on a BMW approaches and says nice set up. He has the set up Iron Butt Riders normally use, a full face helmet with lift up front, a BMW, and hard luggage. I look at him dumbfounded, I am sitting on the frame as always as I have transferred my original seat to the new bike and I have to eat with my full face helmet on. I respond no, and I explain briefly what I am doing. He proceeds to tell me he always wanted to do a Saddle Sore but hasn't. "Wants to" I will never understand this, here is a man with all the stuff to do one comfortably and he hasn't and here I stand in pain 24/7 doing not only that but days on end of just under 1000 miles! I just nod thinking dang dude just do it!

It is Chicago I am worried about now, every time I come this way no matter which roads I choose I hit major traffic. I am hoping that on a Sunday may be just may be I will get lucky. Low and behold out side Chicago the traffic comes to full stop and everyone turns off their vehicles. I even have time to pull out my cell phone to text message Ric and get off my bike to ask the guy next to me if the radio has said anything. Finally the traffic starts to move and we get to see what caused the hold up a truck was burned to a crisp on the shoulder, bummer!

The first toll in Chicago and I shock the woman in the booth, she sees my tiny hand pulling out the money and then I lift my shield. Oh my goodness is she amazed this tiny little woman on a bike, she starts to ask me questions but I don't have time to explain in length so I give her the short version and head off with a smile.

Chicago and a receipt, I couldn't find a gas station so I pulled into a Jiffy Lube bought an air freshener and handed it to one of the customers with my card, I just needed a receipt showing I had been in Illinois. Boy will the attendant and the woman I gave the freshener have a story to tell about the crazy girl on the motorcycle. Sure enough getting back on the freeway I spot a gas station, isn't that always the way!

Today I manage to make it all way to the Wisconsin Dells, I have always wanted to stay here but not just pass through like I seem to do every time. I find a nice hotel and am greeted with all kinds

of questions from one of the hotel employees. Turns out he has a vintage Norton and Ducati in his garage, I tell him he should Ebay them as people where I come from would love to get their hands on them! I crash for the night it has been long and hard riding today. I find out upon my return my text message to Ric that night sent him, my parents and his parents on a hunt to figure out what it said, eventually they did but I definitely made it difficult; my fingers weren't quite working.

Monday at 2:48 am MT signifies the start of day 8. I had set my sights on 8 days rather than 10 as I simply like to push myself to be the best that I can, but now I was under the gun I had over 1000 miles to do today if I wanted to complete this ride before day 9. So I was on the road just after midnight.

I would ride long and hard through some of the most boring states, nothing to see for miles and miles, and hard to find gas on a regular basis so I was having to stop more then I like too, compounding this is the pain I am experiencing in my shoulder from the accident, I was hurting so bad I was popping Advil like candy (something I don't normally abide by). I rode through Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas finally ending in Missouri.

At some point I run into another Iron Butt Rider, I believe it was Fargo, North Dakota. He is all set up, with the BMW, the gps, etc. But he is kind enough to say hi and we talk briefly as we are both out to get the 48 done, he however is two up on me having done Alaska and now on his way to finish the states and then add to that Mexico. I am truly impressed this is the kind of Iron Butt Rider I would love to be, unfortunately he probably out weighs me by over 150 lbs and towers over me at I am sure more than six feet, meaning he can ride a much bigger more comfortable bike and doesn't have to worry too much about his personal safety. Ah well, I do what I can.

The temperatures had started at below 40 in the morning and by the time I arrived in St Joseph, Missouri they had reached record highs over 90. I was dripping in my gear, as wet as I had been from the pouring rain in Virginia, but not caring I was done or would be as soon as I found two witnesses.

I picked up my gas receipt which would designate my official stop time and then commenced to try to convince someone to witness me in. I had never had trouble with this before but today it proved difficult. I actually had to beg two men one delivering ice to the gas station and one construction guy putting oil in his work truck that they would not be marketed and that I really needed help! They were wonderful and I am forever indebted to them both as I would not be official without their ok's.

I then made my way to the area of town where the hotels were located, and found where I had stayed several years earlier. I was so happy to hear they had a room I called the woman my savor. I text messaged Ric, called my parents and then Ric to say I was done, tired and sore but done! 8 days 12 hours 50 minutes and according to my odometer 7828 miles done, now I just needed to ride the 1800+ miles home! The ride home proved to be as hard if not harder then many of the days I was out on the ride; I long for the day that I don't have to ride home, that I can trailer the bike so I can rest, but there is no rest for the weary and broke.

I have blisters on my ears from my helmet, I have a small rash where my underwear has been rubbing, my shoulders are so sore the pain wakes me from my sleep, but I have done it. I have been met with disbelief when I relay what I have done, often not with the ride its self but that I am alone. This surprises me and confounds me, why are people more awed by my being alone then the ride? I know few people who can even ride more than a couple hundred miles in a day so to ride for hundreds and hundreds of miles for days on end would definitely amaze me more then that I was alone!

The other comment I kept hearing on this ride over and over was "I haven't seen a Ducati since the 70's, I didn't even know they still made them." Gosh, guess this just goes to show perhaps Ducati needs to sponsor me so that they can get more publicity!

My sister and mom ask if I am pleased and proud, I am. I have conquered another ride that few have done, and I am the first to have completed it on a Ducati. I come home to learn I may also be the first to have hit the 12,000 mile service on an S2R it is that new! So what is my next ride, everyone is asking. I don't know give me a few days to get some sleep and some hot meals in my stomach before I decide.

In closing, I returned to the news that my original mentor, Ron Smith, the man who signed me in and out for my first Saddle Sore 1000, 5 years ago had passed. He will never know how far I have come, or the monster he created that day 5 years ago when he challenged me to finish in 15 hours, but I will never forget that he believed in me! Ron god speed!