



Summer Time = Rally Time

As usual there are a host of rallies in summer, this summer there is the addition of the big BMW National MOA Rally in Oregon. This means close to 6,000 bikes and many, many vendors – bring your credit cards!

Most of these rallies have a cut-off date for early registration at reduced costs. Here are those dates:

<u>RALLY</u>	<u>Early Registration</u>	<u>Rally Dates</u>
Chief Joseph, John Day, OR	June 4	June 13 to 16
BMW National Rally, Salem, OR	June 30	July 18 to 21
Cascade Rendezvous, Republic, WA	July 5	July 25 to 28
Hotspings Rally, Nakusp, BC	August 4	August 15 to 18

We usually have 5 to 10 club members attending a rally, sometimes more. Please drop me a line if you're going.

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Next Breakfast/Brunch

Sunday, May 5



WHERE:

**Qualicum Memorial
Golf Course**

469 Memorial Ave.,
Qualicum Beach, BC

Time:

11:00 am



Return to the Baja

*A story in two parts
by Geoff Stevenson*

The discussion had been going on over coffee for weeks. Should we visit the Baja again? If so, should we ride all the way or do part of the trip on four wheels (we had four trucks among us)?

Eventually, it was resolved: The wimps would take a truck and trailer and the riders would ride.

And so, in mid-March, Dennis Sorensen and I rode into a Motel Six in El Cajon, CA., to meet Jorgen Andersson and Ernie Lalonde en route to Baja California.

My little Yamaha XT 225 fit easily in the box of my trusty Ford Ranger and Dennis' GS650/800 sat securely on his trailer, which weighed perhaps 800 pounds loaded. The rig covered just over 5,000km in all - and towed perfectly. (The Ranger is a 2009, with 4-litre V6 and automatic transmission, rated to pull 4,500 pounds).

I'd arranged to leave our rig in a fenced RV compound in Borrego Springs, CA a few weeks before. Dennis and I then unloaded our bikes and rode about 100km to El Cajon. The storage cost \$25 a month and might have been our best buy of the trip.

Ernie and Jorgen had ridden a combination of Interstate 5 and some twisty mountain roads



The only way to fly (down I5): Geoff's little Yamaha and Dennis' Beemer ready for the trip south.

around Palm Springs, CA., before our rendezvous in El Cajon, which is essentially an eastern suburb of San Diego.

Jorgen and I rode to the Baja in 2009 with two friends. It was a great trip, but I vowed I'd never ride the length of I5 again after that trip (which ended in a snowstorm heading into Seattle).

I reckon this truck trip made a lot of sense. Heck, when it rained, we turned on the wipers. When it was hot, we cranked up the air conditioning. A little cool? Well, just turn up the heat.

We crossed the Mexican border

at Tecate, as we did last time. Then, the border post had been abandoned and we just rode straight through, clearing Mexican Customs and Immigration in Guerrero Negro, about 1,000km south (and the border between Baja California North and South).

This time, there were electronic barriers. They dropped down, we stopped our bikes obediently, and, after a short pause, the barriers went up and we were free to go. Or so we thought. (I assume an automatic camera snapped our licence plates while the barrier was down)



It pays to check on the rules

Turns out, the rules have changed, and we should have stopped in Tecate and bought a Mexican tourist visa.

A little on-line research a few days later turned up the case of an American rider who failed to buy his visa. He was able to do so later on - but had to pay around \$35 for the visa, plus a \$100 fine.

We checked in dutifully in Guerrero Negro. A fluently bilingual immigration officer who couldn't have been more helpful explained the new procedure and directed us to Immigration at La Paz Airport, roughly 750km south, after I told him we were headed that way.

A few days later, I sat in an office in the airport to explain our predicament. Another officer - this time with limited English, but equally helpful - said we needed to go to head office in Cabo San Lucas and get a special letter explaining our mistake. This, he explained patiently, would be good for 30 days.

We rode on and eventually presented ourselves in Cabo. This time, a woman officer, also with perfect colloquial English, logged us into the system, took the details of our transgression, and said we should come back in three days to receive our paperwork.

We returned at the appointed date, signed our lives away and got our

letters. We did not pay for the visa - and all the paperwork turned out to be free (although not to the Mexican taxpayer).

Subsequently, nobody ever asked to see the letters, and we cleared Tecate and the Mexican border without incident about 10 days later.

A bed for the night

Mexican motels vary dramatically. In El Rosario, we stayed at the Baja Cactus Hotel and paid around \$35 for a tasteful room with two king beds and an elegant tiled bathroom (twin sinks and a shower big enough for a whole hockey team). On the return trip, we stayed in the

annex, with more modest rooms but now less than \$30.

Then there was the Hotel Maribel in Ciudad Constitucion. The beds (smaller) were hard, the carpet was threadbare, the paint was peeling in the shower - and there was no shower head. But we'd had a long ride in the heat when we arrived and at least the shower was warm and wet. Besides, there was an indoor courtyard in which to park the bikes. In the morning, we rode through the lobby, out onto the sidewalk and back onto the street.

In Loreto, we spent a night at the Hotel Quinta San Francisco, just across the road from the marina. Gail, an American widow who's



Ernie admires the fancy new tourist trap at the Tropic of Cancer, between La Paz and Cabo San Lucas.



Our accommodation had local colour



What the tourists come for: The main beach in Cabo San Lucas.

lived in Mexico for more than 40 years, looked after us well (and, because, I carried a new microwave from her car to her kitchen, did our laundry, too).

This was a deal at \$35/night. It was within easy walking distance of a mercado (supermarket), the historic Loreto mission church, banks and other stores.

She was happy to have customers, since the town had just spent 10 months rebuilding the road in front of her motel. You could still drive into her yard, but lots of tourists didn't realize that and she lost a lot of business.

Current exchange is about 12 Mexican pesos to the Canadian

dollar. Most motels were 350-500 pesos, roughly \$30-\$40. (The Motel 6's we stayed at in the US, ranged from the low 40s to the mid-50s for a room with two beds).

Dining in style

Mexican food is also great value. A humble fish taco, served with cole slaw and salsa, costs just over a dollar in most places. Two seemed adequate for a light lunch.

Rossy's in San Jose del Cabo became one of our favorite spots. One day, I ordered red snapper (menu price: \$9). I was presented with the whole fish, pan fried, with rice and vegetables. I've never eaten more tasty fish.

Las Palmatis in Mulege was also

a discovery. Jorgen and I ordered shrimp omelettes for breakfast one day. With two cups of coffee, my bill was about \$9 and the food was excellent.

(Another great breakfast deal was at Denny's back in the U.S. There, the Seniors' Menu offered a white egg omelette, hot cereal and a bowl of fresh fruit for \$6.99).

Fish soup is a Baja staple. A big bowl will run you \$7-8 and it's full of fish chunks. Even better (and a buck or two more) is seafood soup; this usually gives you fish, shrimp and crab.

Mexican beer in restaurants (only after we'd parked the bikes for the day) usually cost a couple of dollars. I bought a dozen cans of Tecate in WalMart for a little less than \$12!

Dennis and I sampled a few margaritas. They were usually \$3-4. There seemed to be a number of different styles; they all tasted pretty good to me.

Of course, McDonalds, Burger King, Dairy Queen et al are there, too. We tried a McDonalds burrito or two, but tried to stick to more local food.

Among us, we ate a fair amount of salad with no side-effects. I had the same experience four years earlier, which suggests that stories about vegetables not being washed (or being washed in unclean water) in Mexican restaurants are no longer true.



Seafood highlights the daily menu



It tasted as good as it looks, too. Red snapper from Rossy's in San Jose del Cabo. Price: \$9.

Laughing at the limits

Speed limits in the Baja are, to be polite, bizarre. They vary wildly, sometimes going from 90km/h to 40 in a short distance, with no discernible difference in the pavement or traffic levels.

I don't know why they bother, since nobody pays the slightest attention to the limits anyway.

The most common limit seemed to be 80 km/h. When I was leading on my little 225, we rode at around 90-95. The others, with their bigger bikes, might have gone a little faster, but we all agreed that around 100 was quite fast enough.

We watched some hair-raising

passing - and a number of vehicles (usually modern SUVs, it seemed) hammering along at probably 120-130.

We saw only one cop in a car with a radar gun (fortunately, I was leading at around 90 km/h, which was the posted limit there - it was a perfect piece of pavement and on a bigger bike I'd have been tempted to ride much faster).

The quality of the pavement varied as much as the speed limits. Long stretches were the equal of any Canadian or U.S. highway. But other sections were narrow and bumpy. And we saw some giant potholes.

The highway from La Paz to Cabo is steadily being expanded to four lanes, with growing numbers of proper interchanges. Bridge builders had been busy since our last visit; we rode over dozens of new bridges - one had seven separate spans covering close to 3km.

Vados (fords) remain common, though. Clearly, if you were riding there in the rainy season, you'd proceed with extreme caution.

The best riding is probably south of Loretto, as you climb up from the coastal plain to the plateau farther south and west. And the steep hill that takes you down into Santa Rosalia has just been re-paved and is now a wonderful series of challenging curves.

Mexico is infamous for its speed bumps. We still bounced over a few hundred, but some of the higher ones had clearly been ground down from 2009 - presumably after a few modern cars with low undercarriages had scraped.

Two wheels for the masses

There's a growing Mexican motorbike industry. Italika seemed the biggest brand and we noted a new 125cc in WalMart for around \$1,200 (the 150 was \$1,400). Single cylinder and air-cooled, of course - and with simple drum brakes at both ends.

The Italika factory is near Mexico City and it produces more than



Our accommodation had local colour

200,000 bikes a year (almost twice the production of BMW). Its biggest model is a 250.

We saw lots of these bikes being used for deliveries (pizza, other restaurant food, papers, etc). Some came as a Cargo model, with a purpose-built luggage rack and a single seat. With a fibreglass box 2-3 times the size of our top boxes, they looked like very practical bikes for city riding. Especially, when you factor in 100 mpg.

Wine for \$3.75. A bottle, not a glass

Jorgen and I have been known to enjoy a glass of wine with dinner. Wine has been made in the Baja since 1928 and we tried a bottle or two, generally spending \$8-10.

But our best discovery was a Don Simon Tempranillo from Spain. This was apparently imported in bulk, then bottled in Mexico. We

spent \$3.75 for a 750ml bottle; it was not an award-winning vintage, but it was awfully good value for money. A Chauvenet (French) cabernet-sauvignon for \$6 was good drinking, too.

We had noted the vineyards north of Ensenada on our last trip, but the acreage had clearly expanded since then. (There's also a new wine museum perhaps 50km north of Ensenada, but we didn't make time to check it out).

There were more grapes in the rolling hills south of Ensenada, too. If we'd been in four wheels being driven by someone else, we'd have been tempted to stop, since a number of the companies offered wine tasting.

Luxury - at \$16 a night

We spent almost a week at a modern timeshare hotel in San

Jose del Cabo, organized by Ernie and wife Carol in advance. We were supposed to have two modest rooms, but a hotel mix-up landed us in a luxurious suite with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, full kitchen, dining/living room with a double bed-chesterfield and balcony overlooking the pool.

We knew before leaving home that we'd each pay \$16 a night in the timeshare. The suite turned out to be a terrific deal, since the posted rate was just under \$400 a day.

The bikes were parked out of sight around the back of the hotel and we enjoyed several longish walks over the next few days. It was 1,924km from Borrego Springs to the timeshare and I reckoned my little bike deserved a rest.

Watch for the end of this adventure in next month's edition of the Beemer Reader.

Second Annual Blues House Concert

Mike and Cheryl Limebeer, club members from Cobble Hill, are hosting their second Blues House Concert Friday, September 13 at 8:30 pm, this time featuring Tim Williams. A \$20 per person fee will cover the cost of paying Tim for his effort. Tim is a blues based singer/ songwriter/ multi-instrumentalist. He is a 40 year veteran of the "Roots" music scene in North America, roots which stretch back to the coffee house scene of his native California in the mid 60's. Settling in Canada in 1970, Tim is a studio musician, producer, and a performer in constant demand. He has played folk/ blues/ jazz festivals and concert halls from Halifax to Vancouver Island to the Yukon.

Mike and Cheryl are hopeful for a pleasant indoor/ outdoor evening utilizing our large garage/ shop. They encourage those who can to bring a lawn chair and their own preference of beverage. Mike and Cheryl will provide some intermission snacks. Those who would prefer to not ride back in the dark may pitch a tent in their yard or consider utilizing nearby B&B's; Cherry Point B&B, Heron Hills B&B, or Ambraden Pond B&B. Mike and Cheryl are also located a short walk up Aros Road from its terminus at Botswain Bank where one could anchor their boat and dinghy ashore. The Limebeers are located at 787 Red Oak Drive, Cobble Hill. Please confirm if you wish to attend.



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	Metchosin	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