

# KING OF THE ROAD

the traffic. We went down the steepest straight roads I have ever seen and also that one you see in all the movies with the switchbacks on it. We had a quick stop at the Maritime Museum, which was next to the ferry terminal for trips to Alcatraz, then over the Golden Gate, which was shrouded in a thick sea mist so you couldn't see any of it. It was quite eerie riding in the mist knowing you were on such a high bridge. When we got to the other side into the viewing area the mist lifted for a few minutes so I quickly took some photos. I said thanks to all the lads and they headed back into the mist across the bridge. I couldn't see them but you could hear the roar of their bikes' exhausts through the mist.

I headed up the 101 to Novato and called in at Golden Gate H-D to get my sheet stamped and then got back onto the 101. I stopped at Michael's H-D in Cotati for a coffee and a chat and asked which way they would recommend for the rest of my journey. I took their advice and turned onto the 12 towards Botago Bay to join Highway 1 and see the Pacific Ocean. Even though I have ridden on the Pacific Coast Highway before it still blows my mind as you are basically riding along the beach. In some places

the wind was blowing the spray across the road, which was refreshing, but it dirtied the screen and made riding towards the sun a little perilous. I stopped a few times to watch the surfers and the world go by, feeling like I didn't have a care in the world.

When I arrived in Mendocino it was like going back in time – the hotel looked like something out of a western. The rooms had no TVs or clocks in them and the bed had the thickest mattress I have ever seen. That evening I sat in the lounge near the window, enjoyed a New York-style steak hoagie that just melted in the mouth, and watched the sun set across the bay. Daily mileage – 291 miles.

Running total – 2,554 miles

## Mendocino to Gold Beach - "a cold wind blowing..."

All the sea air of yesterday and that thick mattress did me the world of good. I had the best nights sleep in years – a full ten hours – I don't think an earthquake could have woken me.

As I loaded the bike I could hear the seals on the beach calling to each other. I stopped in Fort Bragg for breakfast, and sat talking to three Gold

Wing riders who were heading towards Route 66. We swapped info and stories and they warned me to watch out for "swirlies". I looked at them with a blank expression, so they explained what a swirlie was: basically the wind looks to be blowing in one direction when you look at flags and trees, but, you are being blown in the other direction. I noticed it a couple of times and it was really weird as you are seeing one thing but doing the opposite to what you think you should be doing.

I entered Eureka and went straight to Redwood H-D and got my mileage sheet signed. I sought out a Subway for lunch then refueled the bike and set off once more up the coastal highway to Gold Beach. When I had booked into the motel, which was literally on the shoreline, I went to Spinners' Steak and Fish restaurant and had the biggest steak I have ever seen, along with garlic mash and veggies. I was sure my meal was for the party of four in the corner until I saw their meal. As I said before, bang goes the diet. I then waddled back to the motel and watched the sun set and just chilled.

Daily mileage – 294 miles.

Running total – 2,848 miles



### Gold Beach to Bend – "the long and winding road"

Woke up nice and early to the sound of the waves breaking on the beach. So, it was off towards Bandon to stop at the Station Restaurant for a leisurely breakfast. Then I headed towards Highway 101 and H-D at Coos Bay because it was the first Harley dealer I had ever visited in the States. I told them I would be back one day on a Harley – and would own one to – so it was a bit of a pilgrimage.

After leaving Coos bay I took the 42, which follows the Rogue/ Umpqua River, and headed towards Roseburg. The road was great – it just kept following the river and there were lots of parking places where I was able to park and enjoy the tranquillity. When I reached Roseburg I called in at Doyle's H-D, had a drink and just stopped for a general before I returned to the river road. I rode past Diamond Lake and Crater Lake, and the latter was worth sacrificing a day out to ride around – which I will definitely do next time. I turned left onto the 97 for the run into Bend and the end of my journey.

As I rode along the last stretch I started to think about what I had seen and done since

leaving home 12 days ago. I remembered things that I had forgotten to write down and what sort of day it had been – like riding along the Avenue of the Giants and seeing the fire helicopters collecting water from the river to douse the forest fire. I remembered going along a forest lane (being followed by a gaggle of friendly geese) just so that I could ride "through" a tree and say I had done it. I only knew what day it was because I kept a journal and there was no place on this adventure for a watch – I had no intention to clock watch.

Then all of a sudden, I was back at Bend. I rode through downtown and on to Bears and Roses to say, "Hi, I'm back, could you stamp my sheet please?" As I stood there with everyone reflecting about the adventures I had just had, I felt a tinge of sadness because I had to return the Road King the next morning.  
Daily mileage – 350 miles.  
Running total – 3,198 miles.

### In and around Bend – wide-eyed and helpful

Although I no longer had the H-D, Scott had made sure that there would be other bikes available for me, and over those few days I rode a

Suzuki V-Strom and a BMW R1150R. The other good thing was that the guys from the shop told me to call in most days and normally someone would be there and wouldn't mind taking me for a ride-out, often to see things you normally wouldn't see if you were there on your own. This includes going off in a 4x4 for a snowball fight on Mount Bachelor in shorts trainers and T-shirt. Very surreal.

### Back to Blighty (Thursday 18/Friday 19 September 2003) – so long, and thanks for the memory

I awoke at six and caught the transport to the airport ready for my flight home and back to reality.

During the flight I read my journal and realized that I hadn't written down the names of the people I had met or ridden with, and with this in mind, I would like to say thank you to everyone. I'm sorry I can't name you all but from "Pat, the English guy", who you said never seemed to worry or have a care in the world, "Thank you." Also, special thanks to Scott at Roadtrip USA who helped make everything possible.

