

Alaska Trip



9,454 Miles Round Trip from Hernando to Homer

A good friend of ours, Jimmy “Taco” Burns, participated in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge in August 2024. This challenge started in Daytona Beach, Florida down to Key West, then up to Homer, Alaska for the finish. The 225 riders that participated followed paper turn-by-turn directions (no GPS allowed), followed mainly backroads and had to sleep by their bike every night (no hotels). Their route was approximately 10,000 miles by the time they finished in Homer.

I had wanted to take Karen up to Alaska on the bike for years. This was a great excuse to ride up there and see Jimmy finish! And, a prime

opportunity for Karen and I to visit a lot of other places along the way! Plus, we had just retired, so we had plenty of time!

The Hoka Hey challenge started on Sunday, August 4. Jimmy planned to be in Homer by day 13 (August 16) of the challenge, in time for the “End of the Road Party” on day 14 (August 17). Our goal was to arrive in Homer a day ahead of Jimmy (August 15).

August 3 - We were on the bike and heading out of Hernando by 7:00 am. We would ride a clockwise route to and from the ALCAN Highway over the course of our 3 ½ week trip.

Truck traffic wasn’t too bad as we headed west on I-40. The temperature warmed up as the day went on. By afternoon, it peaked at 104 degrees as we rode through Oklahoma! We stopped in Wichita, Kansas for the night. *594 miles*



Wichita, Kansas

August 4 - We headed north to Salina where we jumped on I-40 west. As we rode through Kansas, the temperature rose again—up to 106 degrees when we crossed into Colorado. This was the hottest temperature that we had ever ridden in! We couldn’t avoid it. It was hot all over the U.S..

The scenery was beautiful as the Rocky Mountains slowly grew out of the horizon on our way to Denver. There we hit I-25 up to Cheyenne, Wyoming to I-80 and over to Laramie for the night.

We saw hundreds pronghorn antelope as we entered Wyoming. We love to see these unique prairie

goats as we ride across the plains!
649 miles



Laramie, Wyoming

August 5 - The temperature was much nicer (80's). It was a beautiful ride as we angled northwest across Wyoming to Casper, then on to Cody where we spent the next two nights. *367 miles*



Wyoming

August 6 - We had a wonderful time looking around downtown Cody. We visited the "Old Trail Town", a mockup of the old town of Cody as laid out by Buffalo Bill with actual buildings and relics brought in to recreate it.

They even had the original cabins used by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and a saloon frequented by their Hole in the Wall gang. Also located there were

gravesites of notable Western figures such as John Johnston (Jeremiah Johnson) and a buffalo hunter named Jim White that was known for harvesting over 16,000 buffalo hides. Very interesting!



Old Trail Town

Later that evening we had reservations at the Cody Cattle Company dinner show. The food was great and so was the entertainment! Afterward, we went to the rodeo that started at 8:00 pm. This rodeo is held every night throughout the summer.

In high school, I remember attending the Cody Rodeo when my family drove to Yellowstone on vacation that summer.



Rodeo Capital of the World

The rodeo was exciting! The temperature cooled down as the sun

set. The wind picked up and it got chilly! A big change from the previous days of riding through the heat! *0 miles*

August 7 - We were on the road at 7:00 am. From Cody, we rode the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway. It was foggy as we started out, but when the sun rose the fog dissipated into beautiful scenery surrounding us as we rode toward Yellowstone National Park.

Highway construction slowed us down in a couple of spots on the scenic byway. Once we got passed that it was a great ride!

We entered Yellowstone through the east entrance. As we rode over the north side of Grand Loop Road, we saw several herds of bison.

At one point, traffic was stopped. A huge bison bull stood blocking the road. There were 2 cars between us and the bull. He was bellowing as he stood his ground in the middle of the road. We weren't sure what he would do if he got close to us! There was a small group of young bison along with a couple of cows working their way across the road. They took their time and were grazing along the way. The bull kept bellowing! It was loud! He was foaming at the mouth! After about 30-45 minutes, the small herd eventually crossed the road. Then, the bull followed them with no other issues. Evidently, he was protecting his herd until they crossed through the traffic, then he was fine! Whew!

It was really a sight to see! He was a big bull and had no fear against the cars and RV's on both sides of him.



Yellowstone Bison

As always, Yellowstone National Park is beautiful! We continued on and saw a bald eagle, elk, prairie dogs and a coyote. We exited the park out the north entrance into Montana on our way to Missoula.

We couldn't ride past Butte, Montana without stopping to see Evel Knievel's gravesite. His son, Robbie's grave had been added since we last visited. They both were well known motorcycle daredevils!



Robbie & Evel Knievel

Their graves are located across the street from the Butte Walmart. We could ride right up to the headstones in the cemetery. From there is an

awesome mountain view! We continued on to Missoula for the night. *418 miles*

August 8 - We were on the road at our usual 7:00 am departure time. As we approached Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Karen found a breakfast joint named "Jimmy's Down the Street"! It was a great place to stop especially since we were riding up to Homer to see our friend, Jimmy Burns! They had huge cinnamon rolls! They were delicious!



Jimmy's Down the Street

After breakfast, we crossed into Washington state. On the other side of Spokane, we got off the interstate and rode through thousands of acres of wheat fields. Karen and I both enjoyed the rolling hills and amber waves of grain for as far as we could see in all directions!

We crossed the Canadian border into British Columbia at Osoyoos. We rode through several vineyards and wineries with beautiful mountain backdrops as we headed north. We stopped in Kamloops for the night. *556 miles*

August 9 - This was a relatively short day as we rode to Prince

George—A popular place for long-distance riders on their way to and from Hyder, Alaska. It has a population of over 76,000—A large city for Canada with all the amenities as far as hotels and restaurants. We stayed at the same Best Western hotel that I stayed at during my UCCC ride a couple months earlier. *325 miles*

August 10 - Our first stop today was the World's largest fly-fishing rod in Houston, British Columbia. I remember taking a picture of this on my trip in 2011.



Largest Fly-Fishing Rod

The scenery kept getting better as we rode north. We saw several blacktail deer, a moose and a black bear. We continued to Smithers. There's a beautiful mountain range in that area.

At Meziadin Junction, we turned toward Hyder on Highway 37A. This is a beautiful road that took us through some of the most awesome mountain views. There, the steep mountains rise straight up from the ground! We stopped at Bear Glacier for a photo op. This was my 4th visit over the years. I have witnessed it slowly disappear.



Bear Glacier

We had breathtaking views all the way to Stewart, British Columbia. There, we went through town on our way to Hyder, Alaska. It's an amazing sight as we rode by the Portland Canal which runs out to the Pacific Ocean about 80 miles away.

Stewart is a small town of about 400 residents. It has a few hotels and restaurants. Two miles away is Hyder. From Stewart, Highway 37A is the only way in and out of Hyder.

Hyder is well known to the long-distance community from Ron Ayres book "Against the Clock". Ron broke the record time for completing a motorcycle ride to all the lower 48 states, then he continued on to create a new record of visiting 49 states. He accomplished this feat in 7 days and 20 minutes. Hyder was his choice for ending in Alaska since it is the most southern Alaskan town accessible by road.

Hyder is an old town of about 40 residents. In 2007, when I completed my 49-state ride, Hyder was a bustling community of about

100 residents. Today it's more like a ghost town.

We rode passed the Canadian Border checkpoint as we entered Hyder. I was so excited for Karen to see this beautiful area! We stopped for some photos.



Karen's 50th State on a Bike

This was Karen's 50th state on a motorcycle! She had heard about Hyder for years from me and other long-distance riders. She was glad to finally make it here!

We rode a couple of blocks to Caroline's fudge and souvenir shop. Caroline was Ron Ayres contact in 1997 when he completed his ride.

As we were visiting with Caroline, I reminded her that she was my ending witness for my 49-state ride. She calls us 49ers. She told Karen and I that she was expecting a rider in that day who was attempting a 50-state ride. Karen and I knew she had to be talking about Troy Martin! She was! We didn't even think about being in Hyder when Troy showed up!

Since we really didn't know when to expect Troy, we rode down to the bear viewing area outside of Hyder.

This place had a nice wooden deck above Fish Creek, a stream that fills up with salmon during the spawning season in late summer!

While we were looking around, one of the Department of Natural Resource officers walked up to us and asked if we were the Campbells. He said that Caroline needed to see us, now!

We headed back to Caroline's shop and saw Troy Martin's bike parked out front. What an awesome meeting! Troy was as surprised to see us as much as we were to see him!



Troy Martin and Caroline

Troy had staged his bike near the airport in Portland, Oregon. Then, he flew to Hawaii where he rented a bike and documented the start of his 50-state ride. He flew back to Oregon, got his bike and continued up through Washington state and British Columbia to Hyder, Alaska. He had ridden in 4 states by the time we met him!

After a brief meeting, he needed some rest before he continued on. Note: A few days later, Troy was in a serious accident on his motorcycle

in Georgia. He was only a couple of states away from completing his 50-states in less than 10-day venture. Although serious, Troy will have a long road but full recovery—We are thankful for that!

From Hyder, we had to stop at the Canadian border crossing prior to re-entering British Columbia. Karen and I had dinner plans that evening to celebrate her 50-state achievement and our adventure so far!

In Stewart, we had a room reserved for the night. Right across the street was a Mexican restaurant that had the best shrimp diablo and margaritas! A memory that we won't soon forget! *432 miles*



Cheers from Stewart

August 11 - We were up early to visit the bear viewing area at 6:00 am since we didn't see anything the night before. We were in luck! A brown bear was in the stream eating breakfast. He had plenty of salmon to choose from! The stream was full of them! It was an amazing sight! We watched the bear until he left the area. This was another memorable part of our trip!



Bear Sighting

After that, we headed north on the Cassiar Highway (also known as the Alaska-Yukon Highway) toward Watson Lake.

The Cassiar Highway is a very desolate road for 400 miles up through British Columbia to Watson Lake, Yukon. There were Mom & Pop general stores and gas stations along the way, but few and far between. We rode through several mountain ranges along the way. British Columbia is just beautiful!

In Watson Lake, we stopped at the Sign Post Forest! We had a sign made to mount somewhere in this special place. I have no idea how many signs, from all over the world, are posted there. The place is huge. It's one of the most popular roadside attractions on the ALCAN Highway.

The Sign Post Forest was started in 1942 by a GI assigned there on light duty. While recovering from his injury, he erected a signpost for his hometown of Danville, Illinois, 2,835 miles away.



Sign Post Forest

Our friends, Don and Dee Yates, were there a few days earlier. We looked around for their sign. Once we found it, we posted our sign in the same area. Don and Dee were also on their way to Homer.



Sign Posted

From there, we went to the local Chinese Restaurant for dinner. I had eaten there two months earlier, so I knew what to expect. It was delicious!

Before checking into our motel, we rode down to the gas station to fuel up for the next day's adventure. When we pulled up to the pump, we were surprised to see Jeff "RIOT" Wyatt! He was the current leader in the Hoka Hey! Karen yelled out "RIOT!" He was surprised to hear someone call out his name! We gave him a big hug and wished him

well! He looked to be in good spirits! We'd see him again at the finish line in Homer!



RIOT in Watson Lake

We spent the night at Andreas, a quaint two-story motel on the main drag in Watson Lake. *407 miles*

August 12 - We rode up the ALCAN Highway to Haines Junction. Riding in the Yukon can be very lonely. After leaving the small town of Watson Lake, we noticed there were no longer power lines alongside the road, a sign that we were off the grid. It's a beautiful ride through forests and mountain ranges. It was raining as we stopped for breakfast in the town of Teslin after crossing the iconic iron bridge over the lake.



Teslin Bridge

It was a relatively short day since we wanted to stage ourselves in preparation for the next day—Destruction Bay to Tok, Alaska!

Haines Junction was an awesome little crossroads town—Home to the Kluane Mountains. They form a beautiful backdrop to this major intersection where Highway 3 meets Highway 1. There were a few options for motels and restaurants. Again, we ate Chinese and stayed at the Kluane Park Inn. *369 miles*



Haines Junction

August 13 - It was a rainy day as we rode north. We circled around Kluane Lake toward Destruction Bay.

For almost 20 years, I had heard stories of the frost heaves and rough road from Destruction Bay up to and beyond the Alaska state line—A 150-mile stretch. Plus, I was just here two months earlier, so I knew what to expect. Karen didn't!

It was pouring rain as we passed Destruction Bay. The road was spotty in many areas. Layers upon layers of asphalt patches covered some spots (frost heaves), potholes

covered some spots and gravel patches covered the rest!

A gravel patch (no asphalt, only gravel) filled with potholes may be 100 yards long or 2 miles long. And, it may have a thin layer of gravel or several inches of gravel. You just didn't know what to expect!

We couldn't see how deep the potholes were since they were filled with rainwater. It was rough! I knew from prior experience that 45-50 mph was better than 35 mph. This did help to keep the bike stable in the gravel. There was so much water in some of the potholes, it would make a huge splash from the front tire and channel up inside my pant legs and down into my boots. My right boot filled with water! My left boot had some water in it, but not quite as much as my right.

We rode up on a group of four Hoka Hey riders that were stopped in the middle of the road enjoying the pouring down rain. One of them was standing alongside the road relieving himself. I recognized Patrick Cornell. We would see them in Homer!



We Made It

The rain stopped and the sun came out by the time we hit the Alaska state line. It was a great sight to see! We were making progress! Of course, we had to stop for a photo op!

It was another 80 miles to the town of Tok, Alaska, but don't let the pavement fool you! It'll turn into a potholed gravel patch without warning!

We were glad to arrive at Fast Eddy's restaurant in Tok! It was another place that long-distance riders visit on their way to Alaska. Fast Eddy's is a big restaurant. Their food is great! We also had a room there for the night.



Fast Eddy's

While checking Jimmy's progress in the Hoka Hey, we saw that he would be riding through Tok that night. We knew he had been having issues with his fuel pump. We didn't want to distract him during his ride, so Karen reached out to his wife, Toni, to assure her that we would be available to help Jimmy in any way should he have a problem.

We also knew that if Jimmy didn't have any problems, he would be in

Homer the next day! We had to change our plans and ride directly there the next day in order to see him cross the finish line—The purpose of our trip!

That night, Karen got out the hair dryer and stuck it in my boot! She made sure both of my boots were dry before we went to bed. I appreciated that greatly the next day! *292 miles*

August 14 - We changed plans from a 320-mile day to Anchorage to a 500-mile day to Homer.

Since Jimmy's route took him up to Fairbanks and down through Anchorage to Homer, we went directly from Tok to Homer and arrived before he did.

Our route down Highway 1 through Glennallen and Palmer was spectacular! Although cold to start off, the day turned out beautiful! Mountains on both sides of us as we rode along. We passed a huge glacier (Matanuska Glacier).

We arrived in Homer and checked into our room at the Driftwood Inn. We found Toni and walked down to the Hoka Hey finish line less than 100 yards away. It was exciting to watch riders complete the challenge as we waited for Jimmy. And, it was awesome to see him cross the line! Everyone was cheering!

Although Jimmy looked worn out, he was reinvigorated with the warm welcome at the finish!

Jimmy finished on day 11, two days earlier than he had planned. He was 30th out of 225 riders that started this challenge in Daytona Beach, Florida.



Jimmy's Interview at the Finish

Once Jimmy had time to get cleaned up, we met him and Toni for dinner across the street at AJ's Old Town Steakhouse. We had a great evening meal to celebrate! *530 miles*



Toni & Jimmy at the Finish Line

August 15 - Karen and I were up and about early. After breakfast, we rode around the Homer area taking pictures. We rode down the Homer Spit to look around as well.

The Homer Spit is a little peninsular about 5 or 6 miles long. There, they have a wharf with several shops and restaurants. It's a cool place with a beautiful mountainous backdrop

from across the bay. We visited the spit a few times during our 4-night stay in Homer.



Homer Spit

The Salty Dawg was an awesome little tavern at the bottom of an old lighthouse. A place we'd seen only in pictures. Inside, the walls and ceiling looked like shag carpet made of one-dollar bills. Of course, we had to write Team Campbell on a dollar bill, date it, and tack it to the ceiling too!



Salty Dawg Saloon

Later that morning, Don and Dee Yates joined us in Homer. The six

of us, Jimmy, Toni, Don, Dee, Karen and I shared a nice lodge for the next 3 nights. It was the perfect place for all of us! There was a nice big common area that looked out over the water.



Inside the Salty Dawg

The next couple of days, we hung out, looked around, would go watch riders cross the finish line and just had a great time in Homer!



Don & Dee at the Spit

August 17 - The Hoka Hey End of the Road Party was held at 4:00 pm at Alice's Champaign Palace. There was a big crowd with a local band playing. We were treated to burgers as guests of the Hoka Hey. It was a big time!

All riders that completed the challenge by the End of the Road Party were considered Elite

Finishers. Anyone that finished after that were just considered finishers and it didn't matter how long it took them to eventually cross the finish line. Although it's not considered a race, the first person to cross the finish line does get a large trophy to keep until the next Hoka Hey two years away.

Unfortunately, due to an error in the turn-by-turn directions, our friend, RIOT, crossed the finish line second. Dirty Dan (Dan Bell) crossed the finish line first. It took him nine days to ride the 9,500-mile route.



Homer Spit End of the Road

The day before we left Homer, I noticed our rear tire was worn. I called all over Homer and Anchorage in hopes of finding a tire. No luck! Everyone said they could get one in a week. Finally, I called the Yamaha dealer in Whitehorse, Yukon. They replaced my V-Strom tires in 2011 and were very accommodating. Thirteen years later, they were just as accommodating! They said they had a tire that would fit, although it was a crotch rocket tire made of a softer compound. I said that would be

better than what we have—Please hold it for us!

August 18 - Back on the road again! We started our trek back home and returned to Tok the same way we came. Just breathtaking! We had reserved a cabin at Fast Eddy's since all their rooms were booked. Of course, another great dinner at Fast Eddy's before we checked in! *538 miles*



Cabin at Fast Eddy's

August 19 - It was DeJa'Vu as we revisited the worst section of road on our entire trip—Tok to Destruction Bay. At least the weather was nice on the return trip!

Whatever potholes and frost heaves we missed the first time, I'm sure we hit the second time around! Since it wasn't wet this time, it was dusty in those gravel areas! We would see a cloud of dust before we saw an oncoming car or RV.

We made it to Whitehorse (the capital of the Yukon). We spent the night with a plan of being at the Yamaha dealership first thing the next morning with hopes of them getting us on an empty service rack. If not, I would have to remove the

rear wheel in the parking lot myself. *388 miles*



We Survived

August 20 - It was wet when we arrived at the Yamaha dealer 15 minutes before they opened. But, if I had to crawl around on the ground to remove the rear wheel, so be it.

When the dealership opened they had an available service rack! And since we were the first ones there, and there was a line, they got us in immediately! An hour later, we were on the road!

We did run into a Hoka Hey rider from New Zealand! He was having some issues with his Indian on his way to Vancouver. The dealership seemed to help him out with his problem too!



Whitehorse Yamaha

We continued down the ALCAN Highway to Watson Lake. We arrived early enough to visit the Northern Lights Centre and watch their two shows: Black Holes and Aurora, Lights of Wonder.

The small 100-seat planetarium style theater was great! We really enjoyed both shows. Afterward, we enjoyed dinner at the local Chinese restaurant again before checking into Andreas Motel. *274 miles*



Northern Lights Centre

August 21 - Leaving Watson Lake on the ALCAN Highway was new territory for Karen since we rode the Cassiar Highway up to the Yukon on the way to Homer.

The section of the ALCAN Highway between Watson Lake, Yukon and Dawson Creek, British Columbia is an incredible stretch of British Columbia filled with wildlife and the Northern Canadian Rockies. It's also very desolate at times with few places to fuel up. Along the way, we saw bison, caribou, bears and moose.

We also rode through a haze from forest fires that had been burning for months. At Ft. Nelson, we could see

evidence of recent fires that caused the town to be evacuated a couple of months earlier. As we rode through, the town was back to normal.



Caribou along the ALCAN

On both legs of our trip through British Columbia, we saw a few heliports for heli-skiing. Evidently, during the winter months, they would fly skiers up to the mountain tops where they would jump out and ski down. A rich person's sport for sure!



Wood Bison along the ALCAN

Along the ALCAN, there were some gravel patches but nothing like the stretch north of Destruction Bay. There was also a lot of construction along the route due to some areas being washed out or just typical road repair.

When we arrived in Dawson Creek, we stopped for a photo op at the iconic "Beginning of the Alaska Highway" sign.



Iconic ALCAN HWY Sign

I was so happy that Karen finally got the visit these iconic places to and from Alaska! She'd heard not only me, but others too—Stories of the remoteness and other challenges that were part of the adventure! Memories that we will now share together! *602 miles*

August 22 - From Dawson Creek, we rode to Edmonton, Alberta. As we rode southeast, the mountains flattened out into forests and farmland. We stopped in Beaverlodge for another photo op.



Beaverlodge, Alberta

We were glad to finally reach civilization again! The powerlines

along the road that seemed to be an eyesore on the first leg were now signs of people and towns! We were comforted to know that if we had a problem now, we wouldn't be stuck in the wilderness with all the wild beasts for hours to wait for help to arrive.

We spent the night in Edmonton. First thing the next morning, we had an appointment for a tire change. That crotch rocket tire did its job for 1,000 miles. Now, a full set of tires, made for our bike, would get us the rest of the way home! *357 miles*

August 23 - The BMW dealership in Edmonton was awesome! They got us in and out, replaced our tires and serviced the bike. That's great service for a last minute call-in!

From Edmonton, we rode to Regina, Saskatchewan. Our route had rolling hills with wheat as far as you could see 360 degrees around us! We've never seen so many round bales! Saskatchewan is known as the Breadbasket of Canada!



Saskatchewan

Now, we were back on Trans-Canadian highways and could make

much better time—Similar to interstates in the U.S.. 495 miles

August 24 - Another day of wheat fields and round bales!

From Regina, we continued southeast into Manitoba. Karen would chalk this up as visiting all the Provinces in Canada and the Yukon Territory. The only territories that we haven't visited in Canada are the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (These are very remote regions in the most northern part of Canada).

Riding in all the states in the U.S. and the provinces in Canada was something we never imagined when we bought our first Honda Gold Wing—25 years ago! Except for Hawaii, we rode to all of them from home—No trailering or rentals!

We entered back into the U.S. north of Westhope, North Dakota. We continued down to Minot to meet one of Karen's High School classmates for dinner, Penny (Mattson) Solar.

After a nice dinner with Penny, her husband, James and grandson, we

stayed overnight in Minot. 260 miles



Highschool Classmates

August 25 - At dinner the night before, James Solar reminded me the geographical center of North America was just down the road about 60 miles in Rugby, North Dakota. That was our first stop of the day for breakfast and a photo op.



Center of North America

We continued to the east side of

North Dakota and jumped on I-29 southbound.

Along the way, the wheat fields turned into sunflower and cornfields. We could tell we were getting closer to home since the temperature was back in the triple-digits!

We stopped in Council Bluffs, Iowa for the night. 678 miles

August 26 - From Council Bluffs, we headed south through Kansas City, Missouri, then down to Springfield and the Ozarks.

We crossed into Arkansas at Mammoth Springs and angled across the state to Memphis, Tennessee. We were so glad to see the Mississippi state line as we crossed into Southaven! 656 miles

What a trip it was!!! 9,454 miles in 24 days! We had the time of our lives! We couldn't have planned a better retirement trip than to Alaska! The things we saw, the challenges we endured, the remote wilderness we survived! Awesome beauty! Awesome friends! Awesome ride! Awesome time!



Cassiar Highway Map



Alaska 2024