



### JAX + Cocoa Beach + Key West + JAX = 1,010 Miles

Every year during Bike Week, the Iron Butt Association (IBA) hosts a party. How do they party during Bike Week? They ride!

The IBA offers “Ride-Ins” (Whatever IBA ride you want to do to get to Jacksonville—Party Headquarters), plus several other rides that start and end in Jacksonville during the event. All successful riders will receive validation and certificates at the event!

Since 2006, Karen and I have attended this event many times. We love to see our long distance friends and participate in the rides. This year, Karen wanted to do the “Krazy Key West 1000”, a party staple offered every year!

The Krazy Key West 1000 starts at party headquarters and requires pictures with your flag at 3 different locations: Ron Jon’s Surf Shop in Cocoa Beach, and the Lighthouse and Most Southern Buoy both in Key West—in any order.

We were up at 5:00 am and at the registration desk just after 6:00 am to receive our flag, number 118. From there, we went into the breakfast area to visit and wish our friends a safe trip on their selected ride. We would see them the following day.

At 6:45 am, IBA President, Mike Kneebone, held a riders’ meeting at the front of the hotel. He updated riders on any last minute issues with their routes and made it clear the ride can be delayed should anyone

not feel comfortable with the weather, traffic or anything else. Safety first!

At 6:50 am, the Snowbird 1500 riders are released. At 6:55 am, the Snowbird 1000 and Krazy Key West 1000 riders are released. We now had exactly 24 hours to return to be considered successful riders!



Rider Meeting

Karen and I were ready! We hopped on the bike and worked our way through rush hour traffic on that Thursday morning, March 9, 2023. Our first stop was Cocoa Beach.

After the traffic thinned down south of Jacksonville, the ride was uneventful. Current weather conditions were perfect! Around 70 degrees with sunny, blue skies! By far the best weather we’ve ridden in at this event over the years.

We made good time. We arrived at Ron Jon’s about 9:00 am. Up until that point, we hadn’t seen any riders since we got on I-95 headed south. But, all of a sudden, we saw 5 or 6 riders pull-in or leaving Ron Jon’s as we arrived. We jumped off the bike, took the required picture and

hopped back on the bike headed for Key West.



**Ron Jon's at Cocoa Beach**

At Ft Pierce, we exited off of I-95 onto the Florida Turnpike. This took us down around Miami, then on to Homestead where we exited off onto Hwy 1. Our instructions advised us to take the Card Sound Road down to North Largo Key, so we did! This took us on a 2-lane back road with little to no traffic! It was awesome!

In North Largo Key, we turned southwest onto Hwy 905 which eventually merged back into Hwy 1. All was good until Plantation Key, where construction had the two opposite lanes merge into one of our lanes. We had a 49-minute delay through stop and go traffic for 3.5 miles. That really slowed us down!

Once we made it through the traffic delay, it was typical Overseas Highway speed limits and traffic. We knew from the beginning to pack our patience and enjoy the ride. So, that's what we did!

Along the way, we could still see some of the devastation from a

hurricane a few years ago and a lot of new construction.

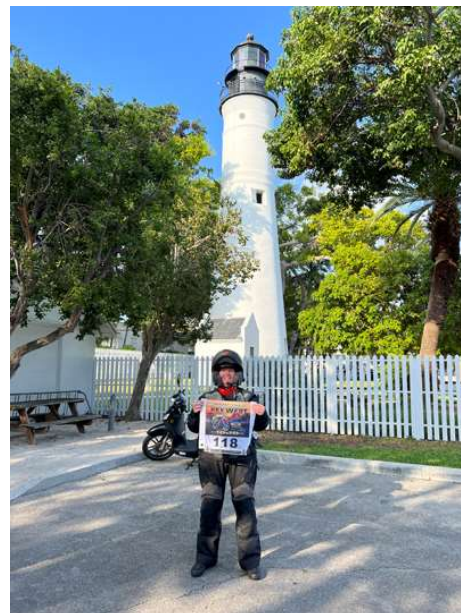
By now, the temperature was up to 86 degrees! It was awesome! We couldn't wait to get into some beautiful sunny weather to ride! This winter had lasted way too long!



**Overseas Highway thru the Keys**

We did leap-frog a couple of other IBA riders along the highway to Key West. Once on Key West, traffic slowed us down to a snail's pace, but we persevered. We finally made it to the Key West Lighthouse around 4:40 pm. There, we jumped off the bike, took the required picture and jumped back on the bike.

The Most Southern Point Buoy was only ½ a mile away. So, we jumped back on the bike for our next required stop! When we arrived, a line of people were waiting to have their picture taken in front of this popular tourist attraction. We stopped and got our final required picture. It didn't matter if others were in the photo or not, we weren't waiting!



**Key West Lighthouse**



**Most Southern Point**

Just for fun, I had planned to stop at the Key West High School to take a picture of their mascot, a giant conch shell. But, since we were running behind, I decided not to until Karen spotted it!

We were going right beside the High School when Karen pointed to the right and yelled "there's the conch shell!" I turned right in and stopped for a photo op!

While we were stopped, Karen started chasing a couple of chickens



around the parking lot to get their picture!



**Giant Conch Shell**



**Famous Key West Chickens**

By now, it's after 5:00 pm, we were hungry! We hadn't eaten anything all day. So, we stopped in the next Key, Stock Island, at the Hogfish Bar and Grill. We wanted to try their famous sandwich!

We had the fried hogfish sandwich smothered in Swiss cheese, onions and mushrooms on fresh Cuban bread. It was great!

Evidently, hogfish are only common to this area and they must be speared to be caught. They say they taste like scallops—a light white fish. All I can say is that it was worth the stop! We both enjoyed it!

And, we couldn't leave without including some Key Lime pie for

dessert! All in all, a wonderful meal for hungry travelers!



**Hogfish Bar and Grill**

We left there around 6:00 pm. Next stop, IBA Party Headquarters in Jacksonville—500 miles away!

As we headed back across the Overseas Highway, the sun was setting. Traffic was relatively light, so we made pretty good time. The construction area that took us 49 minutes the opposite direction was down to about 3 minutes on our return route. Great!

And, since the traffic was light, we decided to stay on Hwy 1 instead of using the Card Sound Road. This was a good choice as traffic moved at least the posted speed limit if not a little above. By the time we were back on the Florida Turnpike, it was dark.

The rest of the ride back to Jacksonville was uneventful. The temperature cooled down to the low 60's. We stopped at the Melbourne exit to fuel up and put on our electric jacket liners. This made the rest of the ride to Jacksonville comfortable.

We arrived at the gas station near party headquarters for our finish

receipt—Official end time 2:24 am for a total of 1,010 miles in 19 hours, 29 minutes. Hooray! We went back to the hotel and crashed.

That morning, we were up, ready to get our ride verified around 10:30 am. The scorers looked at our pictures and finish receipt, then signed us off! We met with IBA President, Mike Kneebone, as he entered our ride into the IBA database. Then, we were dismissed until 4:00 pm when certificates would be presented.



**Awards Ceremony**

It was another great event! We got to visit with some great long-distance riders and enjoy a nice ride to Key West. At the banquet, they recognized Million-mile riders, 100,000 miles in one-year riders and other great long-distance feats. They also released the 2023 Iron Butt Rally (IBR) details to the public.

We were even recognized for having completed 20 IBA rides together 2-up! It was a fun time with great friends! We look forward to our next IBA adventure!