

# Space Force 1000



**New Space Force Station Sign**

This month, I wanted to celebrate the first birthday of our newest Armed Forces, the U.S. Space Force, on December 20, 2020 with an Iron Butt ride.

Doug Vance (retired Navy) was the “Brainchild” behind the Armed Forces Birthday rides. He had been discussing the requirements with the Iron Butt Association. They had discussed that more than likely the committee would require at least two Space Force/NASA locations as criteria for this ride. Stennis Space Center would be an extra location to insure I meet those requirements. Doug was going to ride with me on this trip, but unfortunately, he injured his knee a

week ago and wasn’t able to make it.

My plan was to ride down to the Florida Space Coast and start the Saddle Sore 1000. This is home of the Patrick Space Force Base and the Cape Canaveral Space Station. From there, I would ride to Stennis Space Center on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, then back to Hernando.

*Initially formed as Air Force Space Command on 1 September 1982, the Space Force was established as an independent military branch on 20 December 2019, with the signing of the United States Space Force Act, part of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2020.*

## **Patrick AFB/SFB**

*Patrick Space Force Base is a United States Space Force installation located between Satellite Beach and Cocoa Beach, in Brevard County, Florida, in the United States. It was named in honor of Major General Mason Patrick, USAAC. An United States Space Force (AFSPC) base, it is home to the 45th Space Wing (45 SW). In addition to its "host wing" responsibilities at Patrick SFB, the 45 SW controls and operates Cape Canaveral Space Force Station (CCSFS) and the Eastern Range.*

*The facility was due to be renamed Patrick Space Force Base in February or March 2020, but the renaming has been postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The facility was finally renamed by Vice-President Pence during a ceremony on December 9, 2020.*



### ***Cape Canaveral Space Station***

*Cape Canaveral was known as "Cape Kennedy Air Force Station" from 1963 to 1973, and as "Cape Canaveral Air Force Station" from 1949 to 1963 and from 1973 to 2020. The facility was scheduled to be renamed Cape Canaveral Space Force Station (CCSFS) in March 2020, but the renaming was postponed indefinitely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The facility was also renamed by vice-president Pence during a ceremony on December 9, 2020.*

### ***Stennis Space Center***

*The John C. Stennis Space Center is a NASA rocket testing facility in Hancock County, Mississippi, on the banks of the Pearl River at the Mississippi–Louisiana border. As of 2012, it is NASA's largest rocket engine test facility.*

After work Friday, I headed to Dothan, AL. Temperatures were forecasted to get down in the 30's. Before I left, I decided to add an extra layer of clothing to help keep me warm. Insulated pant liners and sock liners did the trick to keep me comfortable.

Other than a fender bender in front of me in Troy, AL, the ride to Dothan was uneventful. I arrived around 8:30 pm and ate dinner. Afterward, I checked into a hotel for the night.

When I left at 6:00 am the next morning, it was 31 degrees outside. The temperatures slowly increased

as I rode south. By the time I was in Cocoa Beach, FL, at 2:00 pm temperatures were in the low 70's.



**Cocoa Beach Welcome Sign**

I checked into my room and got out of my riding gear. Once in some comfortable clothes, I got back on the bike to check out the local area, take pictures and find a gas station to start my ride the next day.

I rode over to Patrick Space Force Base to get a picture of their new sign. As I was riding down Highway A1A, I saw a block wall where the old sign had been taken down, but no new sign. Bummer! I continued a little way and saw a new sign at the east entrance gate. Yay! I stopped at the gate to ask the guard if it would be okay to take a picture of the sign. "No sir! This sign is actually on the base where pictures aren't allowed!"

Hmmmm, I wanted to take a picture next to it, but that wasn't going to happen. So, I tell the young gate guard that I was here to celebrate the Space Force's first birthday with an Iron Butt ride. Their first birthday is tomorrow. The gate guard looks puzzled and says "It is?"

Yes, believe me! I rode from the Memphis area down here to get a picture of that sign. Can I just take a picture from here? "I'm sorry, not allowed!"

Is there a sign where I can take a picture? The Guard says "My commander told me there is one on the highway between here and Cocoa Beach." I said, I just passed where the old sign used to hang, but nothing is there now. Again, the gate guard is puzzled. He's probably all of 20 years old.

Well, is there a sign at Cape Canaveral Space Station that I can take a picture of? Again, the gate guard is puzzled. "I don't know. I'm not with that base. It's like 25 minutes from here!" Well, sorry for your trouble, I'll go check it out.

I leave and head over to Cape Canaveral Space Station. When I arrive, I see their new sign! I notice it's a few yards in front of the base perimeter (fence). Great! So, I park the bike just off the road.

I set up my tripod and get some photos of the sign. Hmmmm, let me move the bike closer for a pic. I take a few more pics when a man drives up and parks on the edge of the road. He jumps out of his car like he knows me! He has a NASA hat on. I think he must want to talk about my bike or the sign. He shakes my hand and walks around to the passenger side of his car and pulls out a cardboard tray with two drinks (Styrofoam cups). Then, brings

them over to my bike. I ask what's going on? He looks at me with a blank stare and realizes that I'm not his customer!

Now, a policeman stops! He gets out of his car and asks me what I'm taking a picture of? He walks up to my tripod. He could clearly see the new Space Station sign was framed in my mounted cell phone. I am taking pictures of the new sign they just installed. The policeman told me "That's okay! No problem!" The gate guards had called him and thought I was taking pictures of the gate and/or the base.

The NASA hat guy asks the policeman where the launch observation area is located. NASA guy had to deliver lunch to a couple over there. As they were talking, I start gathering up my tripod and stowing it in the bike.

Once the NASA/Dash driver leaves, I continue to talk to the policeman. I tell him that I rode down to get a picture of the new Space Force signs. He said that was okay just no pictures of the gate or base are allowed. I asked him if there were any new signs at Patrick Space Force Base that I could take a picture of? He said there is a sign at the east gate entrance, but like here, no pictures of the gate are allowed. I told him that's what the gate guard there had told me, too. Then, the policeman asked if I was here for the launch that morning? No, I just arrived. He said "They launched a SpaceX rocket. The booster landed back here". Wow! I would have

loved to have seen that. I'm just here this afternoon, then back to Memphis tomorrow. He said "Okay, have a great rest of your day!"



**Kennedy Space Center**

Now, it's 3:30 pm. I head over to the Kennedy Space Center. When I arrive a security guard is sitting in his car at the entrance to the visitors center. I stop and talk to him. He tells me they close at 4:00 pm. It probably wouldn't be worth the \$60 admission fee for 20 minutes. I told him that I wasn't interested in paying the fee. I just wanted to take some pictures, if possible. He said "No problem. Take all you want from the parking lot, but you'll need to leave by 4:15 pm."

I ride around the parking lot. No good pictures to be had from here, so I head back to Cocoa Beach. On the way back, I stop at a RaceTrack gas station in Cape Canaveral. I check to make sure their DBRs (Dated Business Receipts) had accurate information. They did! Cocoa Beach sits beside Cape Canaveral. You can't tell that you've left one and arrived at the other.

After riding around Cocoa Beach, I stop in Ron Jon's Surf Shop. That place is huge and open 24 hours!



**Mural on Community Building**

Now, it was time to head to the Cocoa Beach Pier for some dinner! This place wasn't too busy. I'm sure it's out of season since it is the weekend before Christmas. A lady at the entrance of the pier was taking everyone's temperature due to the COVID19 pandemic. If you have a fever, you aren't allowed in. Someone asked if she'd denied anyone today. She said "No, not today! Everyone is being good!"



**Cocoa Beach Pier**

After dinner, I was tired. So, I headed back to the hotel to get some much-needed rest. I wanted to depart early the next morning and looked forward to the upcoming Iron Butt ride!

I was in bed at 6:00 pm and up at 1:00 am Eastern Time (12:00 am Central Time). I jumped up and got ready to ride! It was 65 degrees as I packed the bike. Then, I rode down the street to the RaceTrack for fuel and a DBR. Official start time: 1:42 am Eastern Time (12:42 Central Time).

As I rode north, the temperatures cooled down into the 50's. Traffic was light. Much better than the day before! The electronic SunPass was nice. No unnecessary stops at toll booths as I rode on Florida's Turnpike. I fueled up again in Lake City before heading west on I-10.

Traffic remained light on I-10 on this early morning. I did see a small group of deer in my headlights on the right edge of the road eating grass. Other than that, it was an uneventful ride over to the Mobile Bay Bridge and through the George Wallace Tunnel under the Mobile River. Temperatures had cooled down to 42 degrees as the sun was rising.



**Stennis Space Center**

I continued across the small section of Alabama and Mississippi before arriving at the Stennis Space Center

near Pearllington, MS for a couple of pictures. By this time, it was 10:00 am. (All times are Central Time the rest of the ride).

I jump back on the bike and continue west to Hammond, Louisiana where I exit north onto I-55. Now it's 11:00 am. I had a place for lunch marked in my GPS. I was looking forward to some oysters. Unfortunately, Chookies is closed on Sundays. I did find a cafe down the street "My Mom's Restaurant". No oysters here, but they do serve a mean roast beef Po Boy!

After lunch, I continued on I-55. The skies had been overcast all day with periods of drizzle and light rain. Once I crossed into Mississippi the second time, this time heading north, the precipitation subsided. Once I reach the Grenada/Batesville area there was light rain/drizzle again. 20 miles from Hernando, I could see the sun peeking out from the clouds. It was 49 degrees as I ended my ride.

I arrived in Hernando at 4:28 pm. Official time: 15 hours and 46 minutes. Odometer distance 1,031 miles.

This was a great ride! I was comfortable and enjoyed the entire ride even in 31 degrees! I knew going south the temperature would eventually warm up and that Sunday would have comfortable temperatures on the way back! It was a great afternoon spent in Cocoa Beach! I was glad to see the newly installed Space Force signs.

Ten days prior, Vice President Mike Pence had revealed these signs during a renaming ceremony for Patrick Space Force Base and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station from their previous Air Force Base and Station titles. Believe it or not, the future is here!

### **Space Force SS1000**

Distance: 1,031 miles

Time: 15 hrs, 46 min.

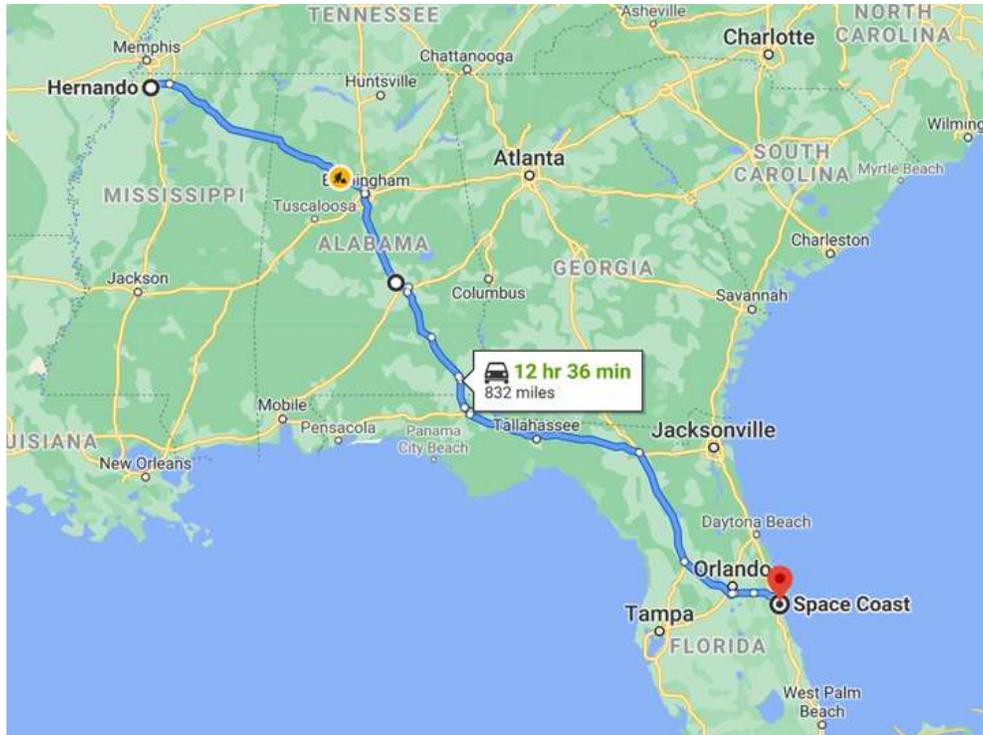
Average Speed: 65 mph

Fuel Used: 32.604 gal

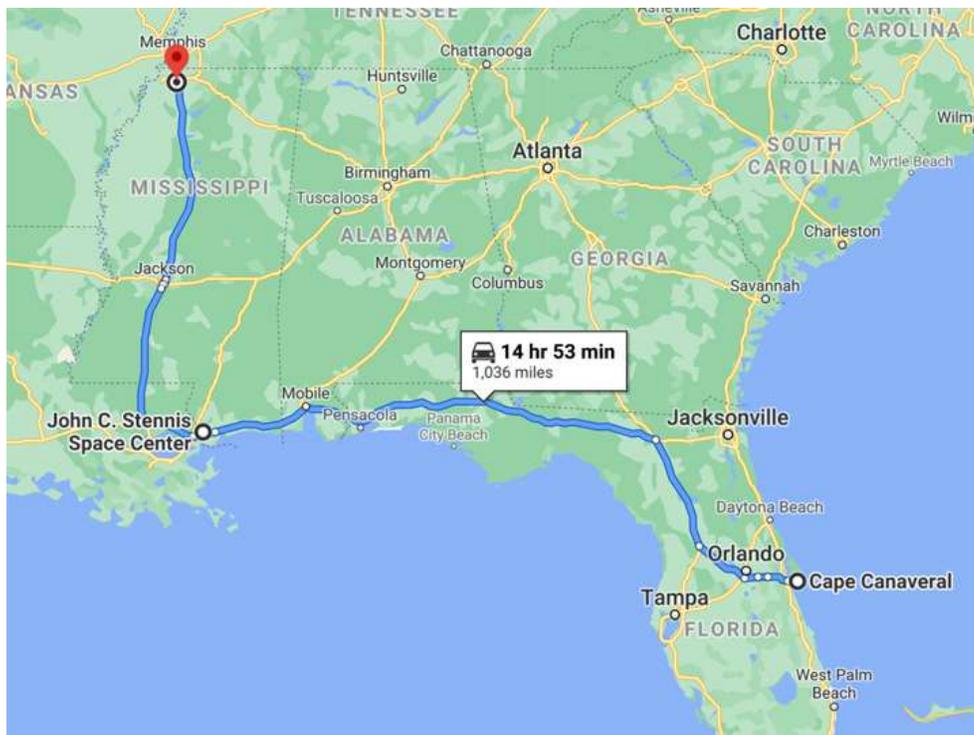
Fuel Mileage: 31 mpg

Low Temperature: 42°

High Temperature: 65°



**Route to the Space Coast**



**SS1000 Route Home**