

GRAND TOUR

Everyone has a G.T. story—here is Dean's:

In 2001, attacking the Grand Tour just wasn't on my agenda. I was occupied with getting acquainted with my new Kawasaki ZX-9R, figuring out how to carry gear on it and so forth. Last spring, though, I decided to visit some friends in San Francisco over the 4th of July weekend and wanted a more interesting course than the straightforward trip down and back on I-5 could offer.

I pulled out my 2001 and 2002 G.T. books, entered all the western Oregon checkpoints for both years into a trip planning computer program, and started connecting the dots. Presto! A boring 700-mile trip transformed into a fun, interesting 1,400 mile trip. It took me from Portland to Yachats, Reedsport, Glide, Diamond Lake, Agness, Pistol River, Patrick Creek, Ashland, Chiloquin, Worden, Alturas, and later picked up the Klamath River on my way home. I caught 12 out of the 30 in-state checkpoints and found lots of really wonderful roads that wouldn't have seemed nearly as wonderful in a car.

I made it a point to spend my money at locally owned restaurants, stores, and motels and to avoid the Interstates. Everywhere I went, I met wonderful interesting, friendly people. Even though I traveled alone, I never lacked for social contact when I stopped. A bike opens doors and conversations everywhere.



In August I began planning a week's vacation for the week of Labor Day, and I knew just what to do. I dug out the G.T. books, marked all the rest of the checkpoints and plotted a course. This time I went from Portland to Bingen, Dallesport, Condon, Irrigon, Granite (via Ukiah), Union, Imnaha, Riggins, Marsing, Rome, Virginia City, (NV.), Denio Junction, Princeton, John Day & home. Now I had 13 more in-state checkpoints plus 1 out-of-state from last year.

I stayed in 4 old hotels, Ukiah, Virginia City, Diamond & Shaniko. I found lots of great roads both twisty and straight (incase your bike needs to stretch a bit—mine did) and all virtually deserted. Now I know why they built the Interstates—to keep everyone else off the good roads. I spent more time in small town Oregon than I probably ever have. I found out that in some areas if your bike needs premium gas, you really need to plan ahead, or plan to make compromises you'd rather not make.

The other five checkpoints? I bagged one at the RCMC picnic at Detroit Lake and I made the other four on my way home from helping a friend build a deck at his house in Albany. I returned from Albany by way of Pacific City, Tolvanna Park, Astoria and Cathlamet. That turned a boring 70-mile trip into a really interesting 300-mile day.

The bottom line? I'm a fifth generation Oregonian, but I had never seen Oregon the way I did last year over the course of those two one-week rides. And, I had a great time doing it. I'll probably never throw out my G.T. booklets. I'll always be on the lookout for the checkpoints I've missed, and I'll probably revisit my favorites.

