

## RIDE REPORT. October 20,21, 2018: **CHINCOTEAGUE & WALLOPS ISLANDS.**

*"Wild seagoing horses meet Jimmy Buffett, PLUS NASA's most active launch facility. Experience the DelMarVa Peninsula as we slice through the back woods of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia to discover an island paradise. 250 miles per day on easy roads/500cc bikes."*

Thus read the preliminary ride description. I think it's a nice description; short but exotic enough to catch the eye. Still, getting classic bike enthusiasts out this late in October can be a challenge. The weather could be, well, just about anything. Seven riders seemed genuinely interested, but due to weather, or for whatever reason, just three committed. Then one rider cancelled just a day before, citing low temperatures as the reason. Finally, an old friend of one of the remaining riders asked if he could meet us in Chincoteague after riding up from Virginia on his SV650. Why not?

Russ lives in Newark, Delaware, basically just across the Mason Dixon Line from here. We pronounce it differently than Newark, NJ, because it *is* so different, putting the accent on the last syllable, so it sounds like Noah traded up to a more recent model ship. Andy is from Gladwyne, PA, an affluent Main Line community, also fairly close-by. These two early rising, punctual gentlemen arrived at the house early or on time; we sat down to a leisurely breakfast and discussed the weather. Both Andy and Russ had been on previous tours, so the need for orientation was minimal. We soon headed to the shop/garage where I doled out winter riding gear as needed to supplement what they brought. If we look overweight in the photos, well, maybe we are, but we look more so, on account of the bulky over-pants (with liners), heavy coats, electric vests, winter mittens, etc. Riding in cool weather on bikes with no windshields is no joke. It is better to have the luggage rack piled high with unneeded gear than to be freezing cold for hours on end. Did I mention the threat of rain?

To honor the riders' requests, I had prepared the Triumph T100C, the Yamaha RD400, and the Honda CB500T. Smaller bikes at lower speeds on back roads describes the profile of our flight plan, and we head directly to Route 82. This is just a mile from the garage, and it is a very twisty and scenic route south, paralleling the Red Clay Creek before crossing the Hoopes Reservoir which services Wilmington, Delaware. Passing the Wilmington Airport, we bump into the Delaware River at Old Newcastle and turn south to parallel the river, soon lifting off onto the high arched bridge that crosses the C&D canal, which divides Upper Delaware from Slower Delaware. Things do seem to slow down here in Lower Delaware, and we pause briefly at Augustine Beach to admire the view across the river in New Jersey, of the Salem Nuclear Power Plant, and to utilize the port-a-potty, which requires some advance planning due to the voluminous nature of our winter riding gear. Did I mention that it was quite cool? At least the rain was holding off.



**ANDY, (not really that bulky!) with Salem Nuclear Reactor, smoking in the background.**



I scatter the seagulls loitering in the empty parking lot as we shove off. This was once the main route south to Dover, but with Highway Route One now open, this road, which crosses the numerous creeks that meander inland from the Delaware River, is all ours, and we enjoy the 35-mile blast through the phragmites reeds, past Dover Air Force Base, where we cross over Route One and head inland to the sleepy town of Magnolia for coffee and hot chocolate. Continuing west on small roads, we soon cross into Maryland, then turn south, passing through farmlands and staying close to the Delaware State Line, before crossing back into the First State to catch the Woodland Ferry across the Nanticoke River.

As short as the free ferry crossing is, it adds tons of character to the ride. Our bikes are running well, and



we have acclimated to the ambient conditions. From this, the extreme southwest corner of Delaware, we angle southwest, finally leaving Delaware behind, crossing back into Maryland where we find two more small ferry crossings, this time across the Upper and Lower Wicomico

River. Bypassing Salisbury, we pick up Route 12 which will take us through Pocomoke and Snow Hill, then into Virginia.

In the outskirts of Salisbury, Russ tells me that the RD has gone onto reserve. I 'know' this is impossible, since we have only gone 45 miles since topping up, so I tell him to press on. Then, on the final stretch before our destination the RD stops running, out of gas for real. This is somewhat of a mystery: its normal range is 100 miles. We rob some fuel from the CB500T, using an empty water bottle to make the transfer, and limp into Virginia a bit behind schedule. Eventually we figure out that the RD was not filled to brim and was most of a gallon short of full. Our late arrival means we cannot tour the NASA launch center which closed at 4, so we head over the very long, cold, and windy land bridge onto Chincoteague Island, where Russ's friend, Kurt, is waiting at the motel. After hot showers to warm up, we four walk a block to dine on seafood, then retire to our rooms for sleep. We plan an early departure in the morning and will need our rest to cover another 250 miles.



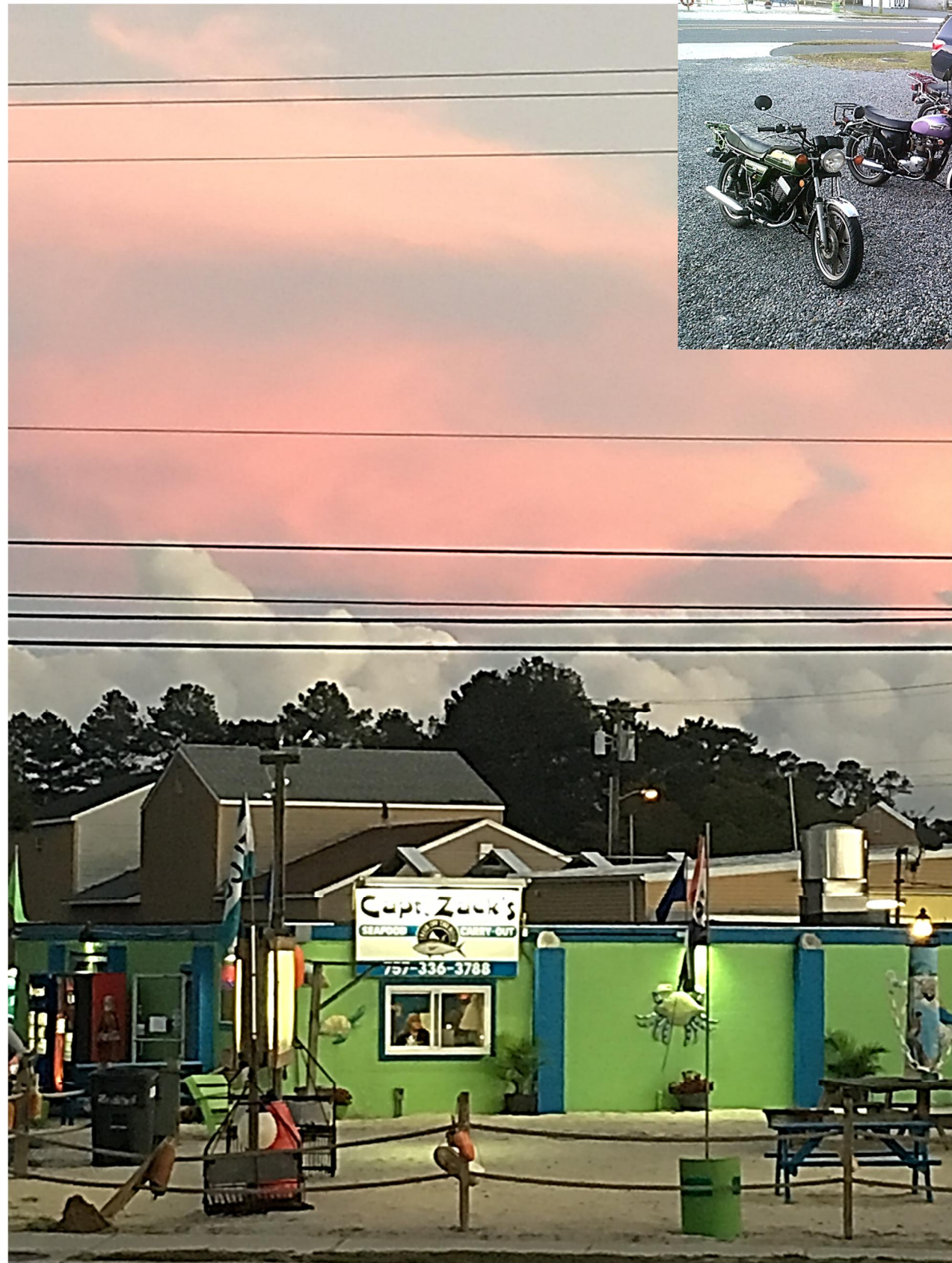


*Kurt & the SV650 were waiting for us at the motel.*



Early Sunday morning, the threat of rain seems to be gone and there is sunshine as we walk across the street for breakfast. A mighty wind is beginning to blow, and we are treated to a spectacular island sunrise as the clouds roll out to sea.

*Could this be Margaritaville?*







*A hearty breakfast. Isn't this the sort of picture that one might post to Facebook, and if so, WHY?*

Temperatures are in the 40's. Before we head back north along Chincoteague Bay, we do a short tour of the island. It is a wonder that these houses have not been washed away in a hurricane.



*Political statement, or wind damage?*

This hinterland of extreme southeast Maryland is where Russ and Kurt grew up, and at Girdletree, Kurt says farewell, peeling off to visit old friends and family. The winds are becoming substantial now, gusting to 30 and 40 mph, as we loop around to the north end of Assateague Island. We lean our bikes into the gusts and ride the park loop road, hoping to see the famous wild horses. The horses are less foolish than we are though; they are hunkered down out of the wind and out of sight. At least we can still tour the vast stretch of sugar sand beach. How different from the crowds that must jam this place in the summer.

*Walkways cross delicate dunes.*







*That's the open Atlantic.*

*Where wild horses may roam; the beach seems to stretch to infinity.*





The contrast between the beach and Ocean City is remarkable: from pristine National Seashore to high-rise, beach-party city. We make the transition, suffering through scores of timed traffic signals, spared at least from the seasonal traffic, following the shoreline back into Delaware. At Bethany beach, we turn west for a bit, then angle north to find Route 15. This is a very pleasant, unused state route that works its way north across the soy bean fields of rural Delaware. There are many turns, but all well marked. Andy pulls over with a problem: his vest is not heating. We discover that the vest wire has taken a lap around the countershaft sprocket. We untangle the knots and repair the wire, deciding that this might be a good time to stop for lunch. Pizza and lots of hot chocolate warms our bellies and improves our attitude. We are ready for the final leg.

*RIGHT: Lunch in Dagsboro, DE*

*BELOW: Blue Grass music at Blackbird Forest.*







*Russ 'at sea'*

Route 15 leads us eventually to the Summit Bridge, where we re-cross the C&D Canal, then through Newark, DE to Landenburg, PA. It's a short hop to the house from here; a good thing, as the sun is setting: we're just beginning to lose the battle to stay warm. On the Triumph 500, the charging system is too feeble to really warm my electric vest. Thankfully, Lynn has a fire blazing and hot food (and cold beer) waiting for us. We have covered 530 miles in 2 days.

**LIFE IS GOOD!**

