

## My Baja Trip - April 2004

By Ken Meikle

I went on this trip with Mike Martin and Peter Groves. They may remember things a whole lot differently than I do. But memories are different for everyone!

Day 1. We entered Mexico easily enough but then became lost in the back streets of Tijuana due to my interest in taking the free road and wanting to go to the Tourista Oficina for our tourist cards. After 30 minutes of wandering around the residential streets of unknown Tijuana I finally asked a taxi driver how to get to the main road. He told us (in Spanish) to go down that road and turn right. We got to the road he had pointed out and found a hill that was so steep we could not see the bottom where it intersected with another road. It must have been a 45-degree angle! We went to another hill that was not as steep and made our way to the main highway. We gassed in Ensenada then drove over Highway 3 to San Felipe for the night.

Day 2. "It's a cake walk!" That is what we heard from a local American when we asked about the dirt road from Puertecitas to Lake Chapala. "No problem" from another. Great! Let's go on the dirt road and see unspoiled coastline and countryside. The first 40 miles of this road going south was pretty good, with just a few potholes and some washboard but very rideable at moderate speeds. Then the deterioration began, a little at a time until we were trying to navigate a very poor dirt, gravel and sand road better suited for 4 wheel drive trucks and dune buggies than our full dresser Harleys. The speed that we could travel dropped with each passing mile until we rarely got out of first gear. Then as if going at a snails pace weren't bad enough the bikes started to break down with alarming regularity. First my Ultra would not restart after taking a rest stop. Then my main charging wire shorted directly to the frame and all electrical power was lost. Mike's Glide blew an airline for the rear shocks and he lost all the oil for the shocks in the process. After stopping to visit with a crazy man who lives in the middle of the desert on this road, and 120 miles and 12 hours later, we finally made it to the main highway. And the best part of all - pavement! It was almost dark and we discovered that the headlights in Mike's Glide did not work. It was another 150 miles to a motel. We made it 4 hours with Mike riding between our bikes so he could sort of see where he was going in the very dark, moonless Mexican night.

Day 3. Guerro Negro is a poor town but it had a few motels, a bar with very friendly people and a shoe store for Peter whose boots had come apart. We spent the morning nursing our bikes back to health. Mike fixed his lights and I repaired my leaking oil hoses. We left and went out across the desert to San Ignacio, an oasis with a lagoon, date palm groves and a mission from the 1700s. Santa Rosalia is a port town that used to have a huge copper mine that is now closed. It is not a place to spend much time so gassed and moved on. We stopped for the night in Mulege, a beautiful spot on the Sea of Cortez. It's a small fishing village with friendly people.

Day 4. We stopped in Loreto, a well-known sport fishing town, for lunch. We had Mexican food again and continued to have for the rest of the trip. Once we got below Ensenada we found that very few people speak English and there is only Mexican food available. We motored south through a few towns and lots of beautiful desert landscape to La Paz, easily the largest town in Baja. We stayed at a fancy Hotel on the Malecon with a swimming pool, TV and air conditioning located right in the middle of the “party zone”.

Day 5. We rode south to Cabo San Lucas for a stop at the Harley dealer where we got some t-shirts, then to a restaurant that looks over all of Cabo. Cabo looks to me like Palm Springs at the bottom of Baja. There are condos everywhere, and there is a McDonald's, and Starbucks, too! We went back to La Paz for our second night at the fancy hotel and some more partying.

Day 6. We started our trip back north and stopped again in Mulege for another wonderful evening at the hotel that we stayed at the first time. The owner used to be the Mayor of Mulege and took us to his friend's restaurant where we were treated to some excellent Mexican food and strong margaritas.

Day 7. We opted to visit Bahia de Los Angeles and was rewarded with a wonderful hotel and good company in the form of some BMW riders that were on their way south to do almost the same ride we had just finished. We sat up with them after dinner and talked about motorcycle riding and drinking Mexican beer. The dinner was Mexican food.

Day 8. Longest day...400 miles for Peter and myself and 550+ for Mike who decided that he was too close to home to stop when we got to Rosarito Beach. Our evening in Rosarito was a lot of fun as it was Saturday night and Rosarito is a huge college party town. Papa's and Beer had a huge line in front, Senor Frogs was packed with 18 year olds trying to see just how much they could drink.

Day 9. After a late night we left for the final run home at 10 am. The hottest part of our trip was waiting in line at the border, must have been 100 degrees! After crossing we made it home with no problem. And for the first time in 9 days I did not have Mexican food.

Good trip, I will do it again next year, anyone want to join me?