

## ***Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana, August 2006***

This was my second major voyage on my new TW, with the objective of finding backroads across eastern Washington to the Lolo Trail across the Rockies in Idaho, then up through Montana to meet up with my wife in Sandpoint, ID. I was gradually working out how to carry camping gear, having added two metal panniers made from duct metal from Home Depot.



*On the ferry from Kingston to Edmonds, showing my new metal panniers. The big waterproof bag held most of my gear, with a map case holding state atlases strapped on top.*

Once across the Puget Sound ferry to Edmonds I continued east on Highway 2 across Stevens Pass. The traffic was fairly light and I had much less trouble with overtaking cars than I had expected. Down the other side I turned off to Lake Wenatchee and climbed on Forest Service roads to camp at Maverick Saddle, the start of the Mad River trail which I had bicycled down several times before. In the morning I continued down the ridge toward Leavenworth, got back on Highway 2 and crossed the Columbia to East Wenatchee. From here I planned to take back roads shown in my Benchmark state atlas, some unpaved, toward southeastern Washington. I climbed up a steep paved grade to the plateau and found a series of gravel roads that took me all the way to Euphrata.



*Roads going east from Wenatchee. The one on the right rolled on straight as an arrow over the horizon, and had no other traffic.*

County roads took me down to Washtucna, where I stopped for a snack at a convenience store. A pickup truck pulled in and a man got out and studied my bike. Seeing my Port Angeles license plate, he exclaimed, “You rode THAT all the way from THERE?? You must have brought it here in a truck.” No, I said, I did ride it. He shook his head dubiously, studied it some more, and asked, “So how fast can you go before it gets REALLY miserable?” I didn’t know the answer to that one. Looking even more sour, he drove away.

I went on, wondering if something terrible was about to happen to my bike from gross over-use, as had been suggested. But it purred on, and soon we arrived at Palouse Falls State Park to camp for the night. The next day I continued to Lewiston, Idaho and started the long highway climb to the plateau land of the Nez Perce Reservation. On the way up I had some trouble with cars wanting to go sixty while I went 45, the best I could do on the climb. Finally I came up behind a big truck grinding up at thirty, and was glad to fall in behind. Now it wasn’t my fault that everyone was delayed. Finally I passed him, a unique experience on my TW.

At the top I turned off the highway to take very pleasant back roads through the reservation on the way to Grangeville. I went into a Subway for an early dinner. Sitting at a table near mine was a man wearing a Hells Canyon Motorcycles tee-shirt. Looking out at my bike, and apparently mistaking it for an XT, he observed, “That’s a pretty big load for a 225.” Actually, I said, it’s only a 196. He shook his head, and left. Hmmmm...

I dropped down a wonderful winding grade a thousand feet to the Clearwater River and camped next to it. The following morning I went downriver to Kamiah, the western end of the Lolo Trail I was to take over the Rockies. This is the unpaved traditional Nez Perce trade route which Lewis and Clark had also used. It follows the ridgelines over the mountains well above and to the north of the highway across Lolo Pass. It had been upgraded a bit for the Bicentennial in 2005, and had new interpretive signs about Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce points of interest, and a new campground. Other than that, the hundred miles of unpaved road was fairly rough, and I rarely got above second gear as it snaked up and down along the ridges. I passed three or four cars all day.



*Along the Lolo Trail*

Returning to the highway, I went over Lolo Pass and into Montana to Missoula. The temperature was now close to a hundred, and I thought I'd better change my oil. The Yamaha dealer had no opening for me and said that a shortage of mechanics meant that nobody else in town likely would either, so I bought a quart and continued up the Swan Valley. I changed it myself in a campground, begging some Dixie cups from a neighbor to take the old oil which I then poured into the original bottle after re-filling the engine. By spreading out a garbage bag and the liberal use of paper towels, I didn't leave any mess.

The rest of the trip was uneventful but pleasant, cruising through Kalispell and on west to Sandpoint. After meeting my wife and in-laws there for a few days, I dumped my camping gear into our truck and we headed west again, climbing over the Colville Mountains and down into Tonasket. The Okanogan Valley was so hot that I had to take off all my riding gear down to jeans and shirt, which didn't seem prudent, but the alternative was hypothermia. For any more of this I'd need to get mesh gear. It got cooler again over Loup-Loup Pass, into the Methow Valley, and over the North Cascades Highway to the coast.

The bike never complained, and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again.