

Ride Report

Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico

October 27 – November 10, 2018



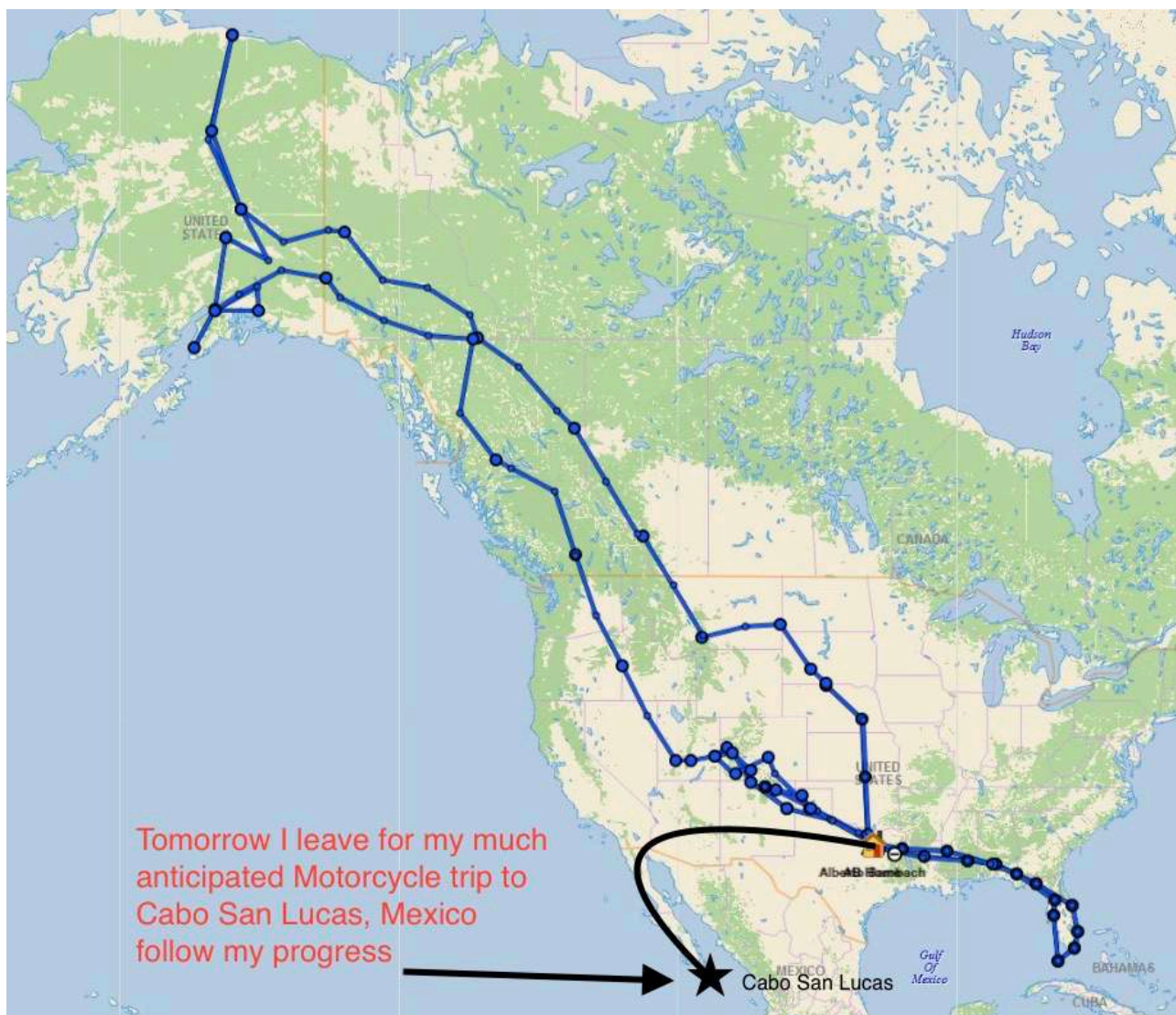
Dallas, TX to Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico to Los Angeles, CA to Dallas, TX

This trip has been on my bucket list for quite some time, but finding a suitable riding buddy was keeping me from getting on the road. I called Nick Graves in the Spring to see if he was interested in riding down with me around May 2018, unfortunately he was in the planning process of his move to Oregon, and could not join me.

Next, I set up a Meetup group to see if someone local to Dallas would want to go, but again, finding someone who can take off for 2 weeks and just go proved to be elusive.

I met Nick last year in Coldfoot, Alaska on my way back from Prudhoe Bay, and later ran into him on my way back from Hope (Kenai Peninsula). We exchanged contact info and became Facebook friends.

Unlike many of my other trips, I did no real planning and decided to wing it. Simple, ride to Cabo on the eastern roads, return to California on the western roads and make a stopover at USC to visit my daughter Christina before heading back home to Dallas.



Day 1 - Dallas, TX to Las Cruces, NM, 675 miles, Saturday 10/27/18

After what seemed like the rainiest October in Dallas, I woke up to a cloudy, damp but fortunately dry morning, with the temperature in the mid-fifties. As always, I will never leave home without my heated vest, pants, socks and gloves. 56°F on a motorcycle is cold, so I geared up and headed west.



Nick and I made plans to meet in the Phoenix, AZ area on Sunday night, he had been on a Moto trip for a couple of weeks and was just at the Grand Canyon, a couple hours north of Phoenix.

Texas is big, the TX-NM border is 645 miles from my house, I slab it all the way, stopping for gas and some short breaks. Days are getting shorter and I don't like to ride at night so I kept on moving.



And yes, everything is bigger in TX, tires anyone?



As I got closer to NM, the landscape begins to change



It's funny what you see on the road, What/who are they really hiring?



Day 2 - Las Cruces, NM to Sonoyta, Sonora, Mexico, 474 miles, Sunday 10/28/18

Since I made such good progress on Saturday, Nick and I decided to meet in Gila Bend, AZ and cross into Mexico on Sunday.

Arizona is so unique; the landscape is spectacular.





Mandatory picture at the border NM-AZ



And the famous immigration check points,



Incoming truck?



While waiting for Nick in Gila Bend, I bought Mexican motorcycle insurance and MedEvac travel insurance, for it is always better to be prepared

International Insurance Group Inc

Policy Documents

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38002121**



We now
offer Medical
Evacuation
Insurance back

to the USA or Canada for trips not only to Mexico, but
also Worldwide! Please keep Travel MedEvac Insurance
in mind when traveling to any destination in the world.

A friendly coyote at our fuel spot, according to a local resident, there is a \$1,000 fine for feeding wildlife



The landscape got really interesting along the way



And the signage, Puerto Peñasco is a very popular weekend getaway for Phoenix and Tucson residents, maybe this is why:



Just before the Mexico border, we made a brief stop at the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.



We arrived at the dreaded border crossing and I am glad to report that it was smooth, efficient and easy except for...

I have heard so many horror stories about the border crossings into Mexico, from long delays for the tourist visa to detailed custom's inspections. To my surprise, getting through the border crossing was actually easier and faster than going through TSA at DFW airport.

At the border, they noticed that my registration was expiring on the 31st and I would have to leave Mexico before then or somehow get it renewed. This is why I usually plan well in advance, but not this time, I was just winging it. Well, there goes my all my enthusiasm for the day. My brain started thinking about alternatives, maybe go to Puerto Peñasco and then back to the US. But I had just ridden over 1,000 miles to get here and really wanted to go to Cabo San Lucas.

While my kids were away in school with their car, I was able to renew their registration without an inspection. So, I reached out to my son Albertito, to see if he could renew my registration Monday and salvage my trip. He said he would certainly try.

This could have been in any city in the US, but its Sonoyta, Sonora, Mexico.



We found a good hotel in Sonoyta for US\$35 and discussed the alternatives for the rest of the trip over a bite to eat and a couple of beers for the princely sum of US\$11, and called it a night



Day 3 - Sonoyta, Sonora to San Felipe, 316 miles, Monday 10/29/18

After a good night's rest, I awoke with a bit of "registration anxiety". We decided to head to Puerto Peñasco and have breakfast there while I await an update on my registration.

On the way to Puerto, as I read the road signs, it finally hit me that I was riding in Mexico, but wait, I did not see a welcome to Mexico sign, so no picture



Nick in Puerto



And a delicious breakfast for US\$6 including tip



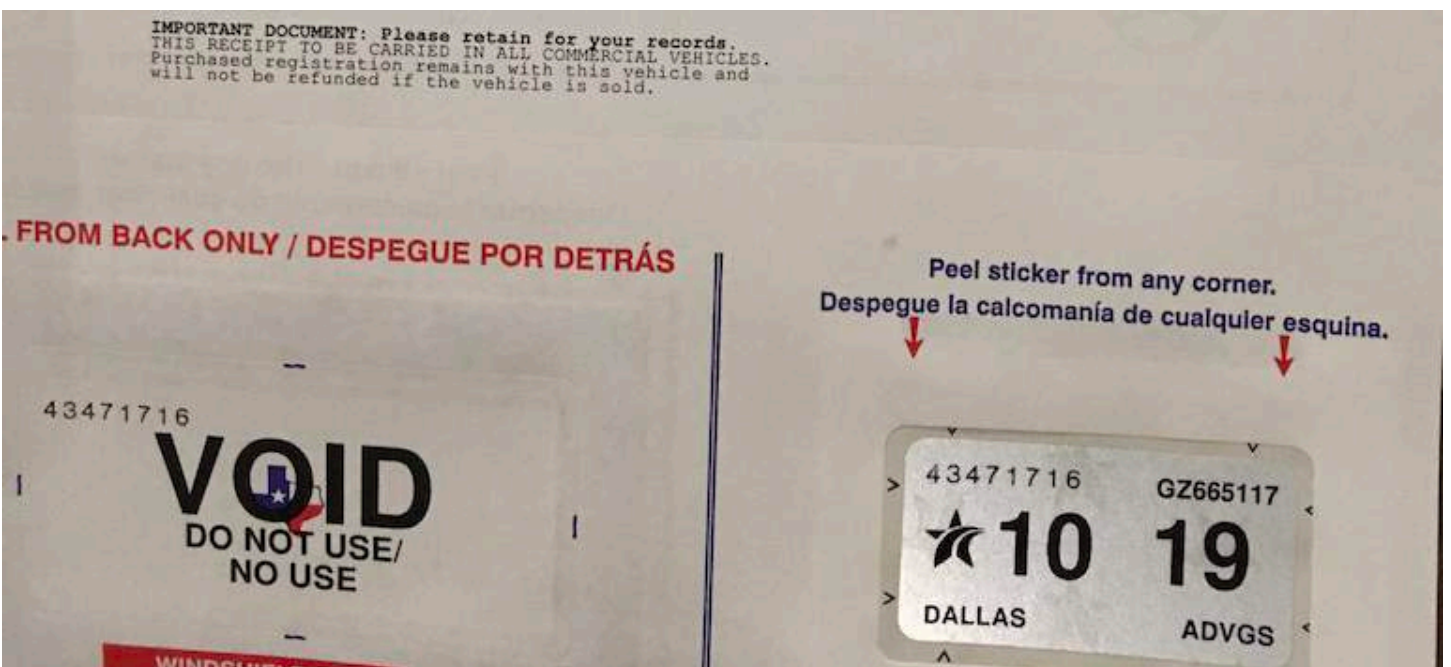
We walked down to the water front while I awaited to hear on the registration. Puerto Peñasco is a really nice town, I can see why all the gringos like coming here for a weekend getaway.







And finally, the best news came along, registration renewed! That sticker looks so good. Thank you Albertito!



Now we were on our way to Cabo San Lucas, what a relief. This is where they grow all the produce they send to the US.



Gas stations work the same as in the US, except you pay the floating attendant instead of at the pump



The highway to San Felipe was very impressive, wide smooth and well maintained. No real speed limit enforcement, so go as fast as you feel safe.

Trying to perfect my MotoPhoto



Along the way to San Felipe, the landscape kept on changing



Entertaining signage



Did I mention how inexpensive Mexico is? A 12 pack of Bud Light for US\$ 5.



San Felipe is a cool waterfront town, not quite as lively as Playa Del Carmen, but really quaint and inexpensive.



Dinner at a pub while catching a football game. just realized I had not watched one football game this year, I watched the 2nd half of the Patriots / Buffalo game. Guess who won. Another US\$ 5 meal.

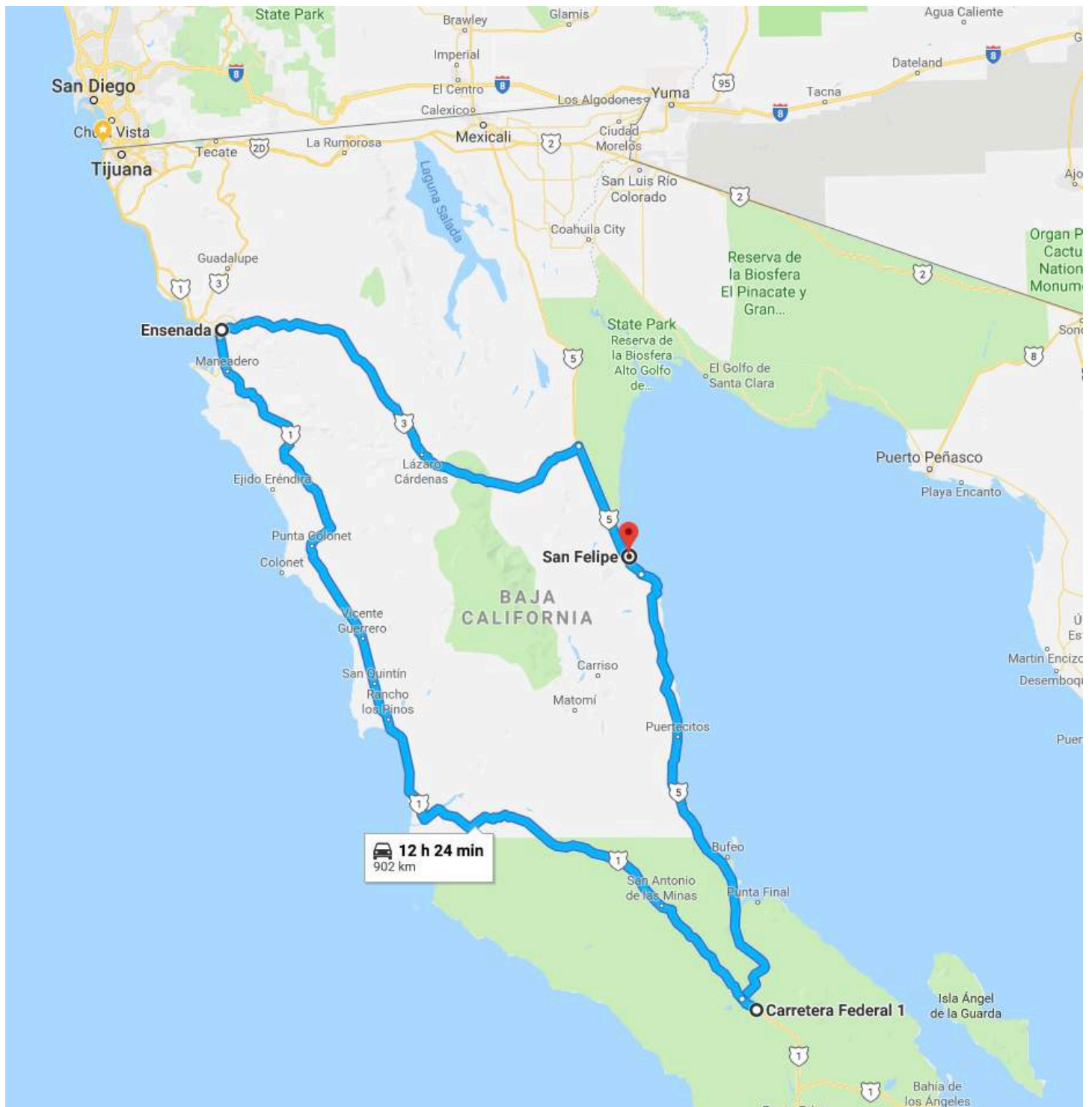


They take their "Day of the Dead" celebrations very seriously in Mexico, equivalent to our Halloween. I found a cute date.



Talk about drama, while at the supermarket this afternoon, I met this curious Gringo expat at the checkout line. I am so glad that he shared the road conditions of ruta 5 going south between San Felipe and Ruta 1 (Carretera Federal 1). He advised us against riding down on ruta 5 because it was washed out during hurricane Rosa, and it is still not passable, even with 4x4.

Nick had just been to Death Valley and took a spill on his bike and quite frankly, I was not going to count on Mexico having a helicopter ready to evacuate 2 gringos in case of either of us come off our bikes and got hurt. The penalty was only adding an extra day to our trip, so I count that as a blessing. We chose the safe way and rode back up north the west to Ensenada and followed ruta 1 down south. More to follow on the road conditions of ruta 3 later in the writeup.



Day 4 - San Felipe to Cataviña, 380 miles, Tuesday 10/30/18

The ride north to Ensenada was a beautiful twisty road with lots of elevation changes. It required concentration, but overall very little traffic and pleasant.

Going through Ensenada was terrible, hot, polluted and lots of traffic. The only good news is that we were once more traveling southbound, and back on track to Cabo.

Ruta 1 was very nice and well maintained for a couple hundred kilometers.



We hit a construction zone that luckily only set us back 15-20 minutes, we rode the shoulder to the front of the line. Chatting with some of the drivers of those cars, they complained about their 1+ hour wait.

This is what you do when you are bored, take construction pictures



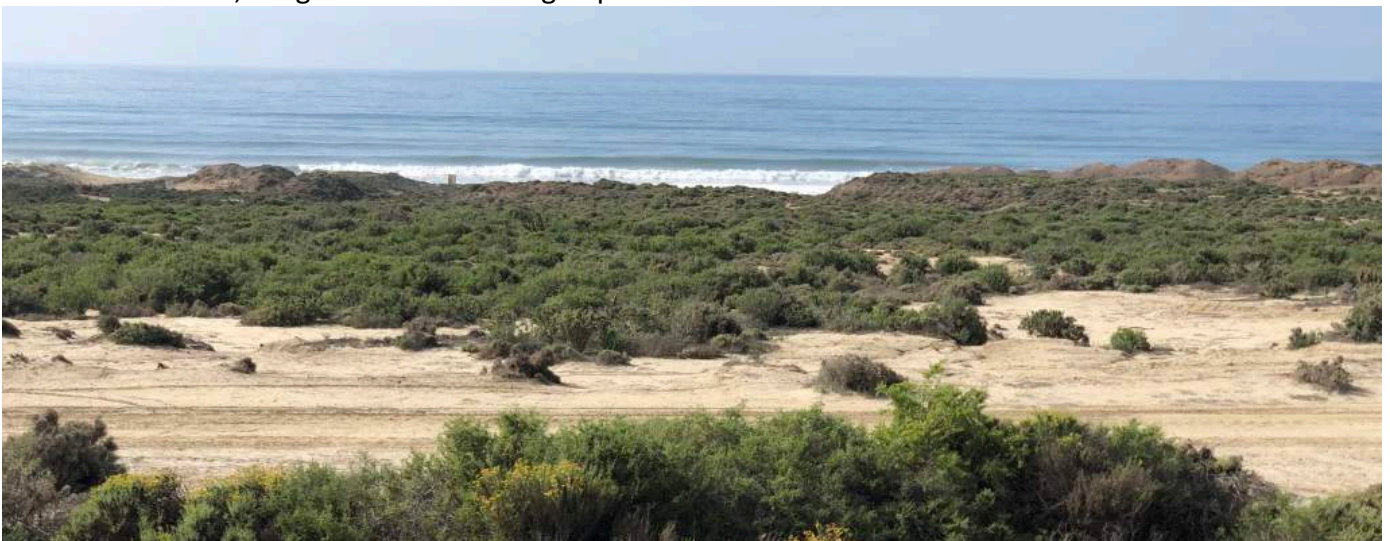
Lots of political signs advocating the National Regeneration Movement, President-elect of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador won the election, here is a link for those that like to read references:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Regeneration_Movement



In San Quentin, we stopped at a tourist information center to ask about the hotel availability once you get into the Área Natural Protegida Valle de los Cirios, fortunately they had a couple of hotels in Cataviña, so we decided to overnight there.

As we headed south, we got to see the first glimpses of the Pacific Ocean:





In the nature preserve, the landscape evolved to mountains and gigantic cactus plants:



These cacti were big, perhaps bigger than in Texas.



As we progressed south, the road narrowed and the landscape turned into cacti and boulders



Finally, we arrived in Cataviña, the hotel was awesome and less than US\$50. It had a square courtyard, restaurant, bar and game room. Very nice!



After dinner and some refreshments, we played a little bit of 8 ball pool



Day 5 – Cataviña to Loreto, 398 miles, Wednesday 10/31/18

The day started out very windy and on a tight highway, you have to stay alert and pay attention. It's pretty easy to get blown off the road on a tight curve.

Typically, when traveling to Mexico, I used to get whisked from the airport to the office, hotel or resort. It's a different experience on a road trip. We had many meals in small towns and restaurants where the food was prepared exceptionally well from fresh ingredients.



There were frequent military checkpoints throughout the various rutas. Everyone was required to stop. A few times I was asked to open bike the panniers. The favorite question at these checkpoints was how fast does the bike go? Answer: never faster than the speed limit. I finally asked one of them what happens if you get caught speeding, he simply said give the Federales una mordida de Mex\$200 (US\$10). Next, he proceeded to instruct me to not giving them more, because “you will corrupt” them and everyone will have to start paying more. OMG, I will corrupt them?



Finally, California Baja Sur and a welcome sign!



As we continued east/south-east, the wind subsided making it a much more comfortable ride. Approaching Santa Rosalía, the views were spectacular.



Santa Rosalía is a very industrial and ordinary town, although this waterfront plaza was nice. We decided to keep going and get lunch roadside somewhere else.



The road south hugged the Golfo de California, and it reminded me of Pacific Hwy 1, between Morro Bay and Carmel, CA. Roadside overlook



This place in Mulegé had amazing tacos for US\$4 including a diet coke and tip





Loreto was picturesque and really nice, yes another very inexpensive hotel, waterfront for US\$61.



An awesome sunset from the hotel room patio.





I didn't realize that Loreto was a cruise ship destination, ship departing as we got there. Personally I like the Yacht on the right.



In Loreto we walked to a nearby restaurant where they served a delicious ceviche.



Day 6 – Loreto to Cabo San Lucas, 314 miles, Thursday 11/01/18

With Cabo just over 300 miles away and another perfect riding day, beautiful roads and mid to upper 70's temperatures, I was excited to finally get there. After 2,557 miles in six days, I was ready to get off the bike for a day or 2 and walk around a bit.

I did want to share my experience with Mexican drivers, if there is one adjective to describe them, I would use "courteous". Cars and trucks alike share the road harmoniously. Parts of ruta 1 were narrow and to overtaking a truck, the visibility onto oncoming traffic was limited. Over 90% of the cars and trucks would turn their left signal on to indicate that traffic was clear and it was safe to pass. Most stop signs were yield signs when the intersections were clear and they had topes, (road humps) to control the speed in populated areas.

The highway between La Paz and Cabo was awesome, wide and in great shape.



Cabo in the far foreground



Finally, the bienvenidos a Cabo San Lucas sign



Cabo is big and most of it fairly new. Lots of familiar storefronts.



After a shower and refresh, we had dinner at Rest the Fish Sushi. It was simply awesome, same or better than Sugarfish in Santa Monica. It just happens that Roberto was trained in Japan, lived in Dallas and decided to move to Cabo for a slower paced life. Anna is an apprentice and values the training and experience. Roberto shared that every employee is a shareholder and it is one of the keys to their success in both customer care and retention. Lots of truth there.

Some pictures:



I have to admit, this was expensive for Mexico standards, but far cheaper than a good Sushi restaurant in the USA.

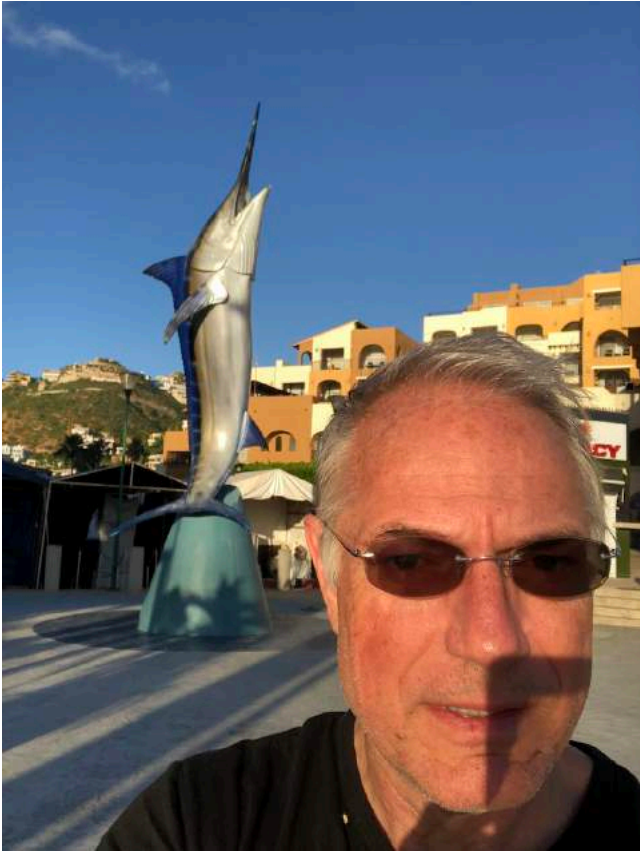


Lots of boats everywhere.





Cabo is a Fisherman's paradise, a huge tourist attraction, and photo ops.



Found a new a new date to have breakfast,



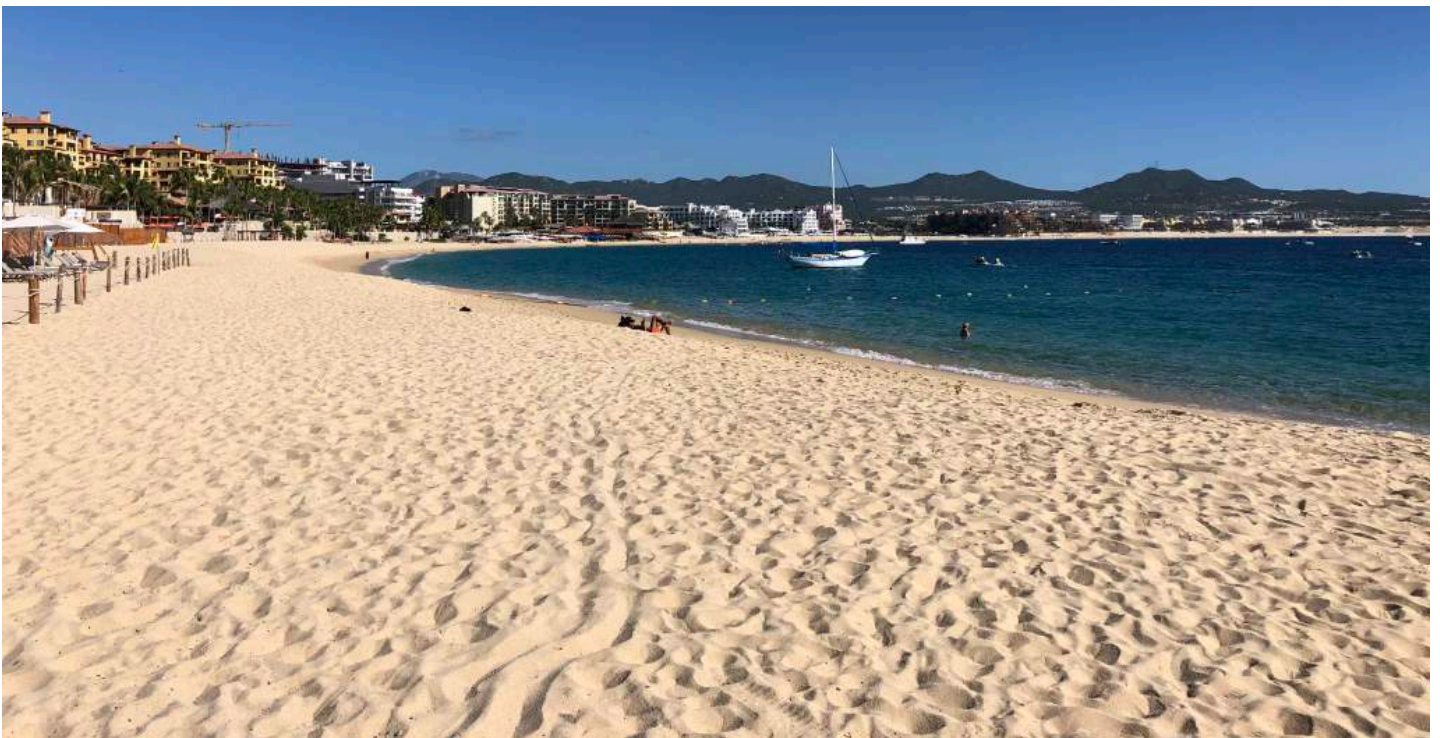
and always have some fruit.



I was walking back to the hotel and I noticed a palm tree trunk through a glass door, and sure enough I look up from the outside and the palm tree is alive and growing through the roof!



The beach, it was beautiful, the water was so transparent, crystal clear and warm.

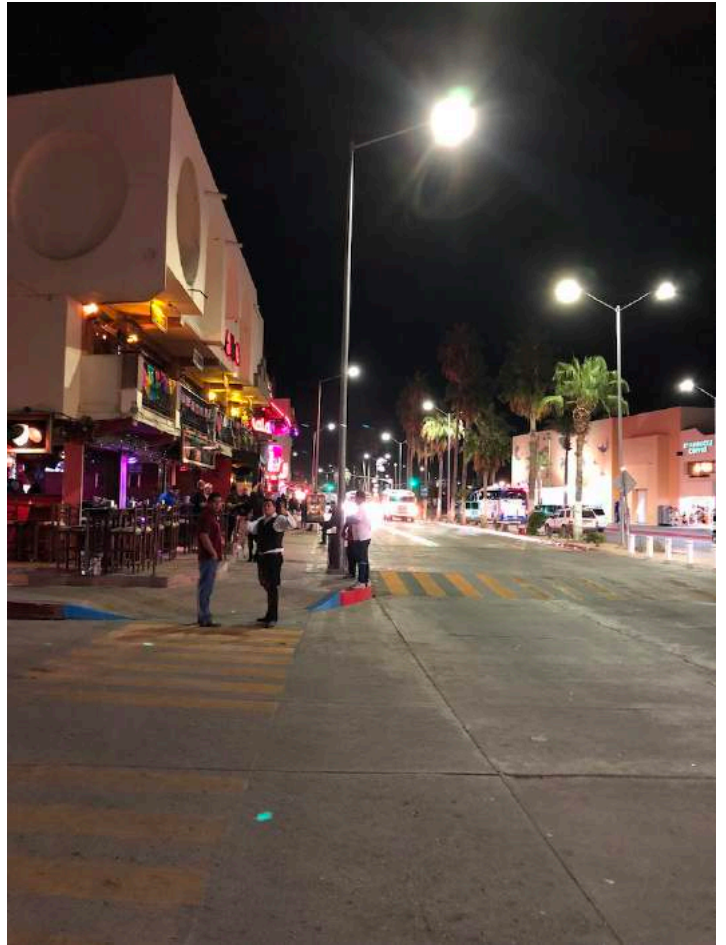




Clear water and soft sand, just perfect.



Nothing like getting a pedicure while drinking a beer, and there is lots of nightlife in Cabo as well.



Coming back from breakfast, there were some people checking out of the hotel and they kindly asked if we wanted some of their leftovers. I was skeptical, but they told us it was customary to add some and pass it along. We had quite a bar during our stay. Upon checking-out, the tradition continued and we gifted the leftovers from the leftovers to someone else.



In Mexico they take “El Dia de los Muertos” very seriously, this person was popular. (Nick’s Photo)



Day 8 – Cabo San Lucas to La Paz, 135 miles, Saturday 11/03/18

During my walk on the pier, I found this perfect spot to take a departing Cabo motorcycle picture, using my sweetest Spanish vocabulary, I convinced the guard to let me ride on the pedestrian pier to take the photo.



On our way back up north, we took the eastern ruta to La Paz, this area is where most of the new resorts have been and continue to be built all the way up to San José del Cabo. Everything is new-ish and manicured.



It reminded me of my home country, Playa El Chileno



Day 9 – La Paz to San Ignacio, 383 miles, Sunday 11/04/18

As we continued our journey north, I thought about the various places I would come back and visit, Loreto was one of them as well as the many coves north between Loreto and Santa Rosalía. Here are a few pictures of the landscape between La Paz and Loreto.





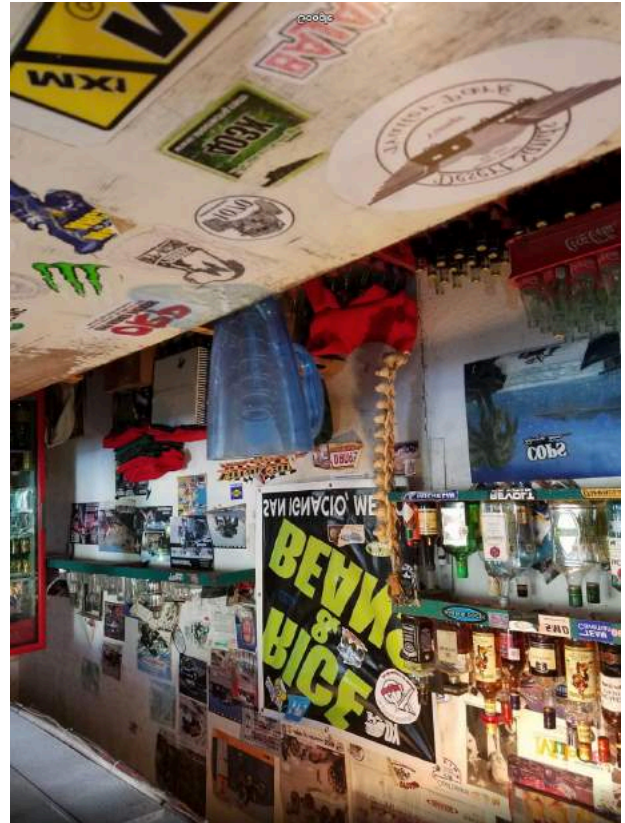
And the bienvenidos a Loreto sign, followed by pictures between Loreto to Santa Rosalía.



There was a rest stop just before Santa Rosalía with a small prayer structure, it was interesting to read some of the notes.



The hotel-restaurant in San Ignacio, "Rice and Beans" is a well-known motorcycle rider grub destination. The hotel not too bad, and the restaurant was excellent. Lots of visitors, so I borrowed these 2 images from the internet.



There we met and hang out with some other riders, top row: Jose, Paul, me, bottom row: Nick and Chris, the speed maniac.



Day 10 – San Ignacio to San Quintin, 354 miles, Monday 11/05/18

Before leaving San Ignacio, we rode into the town center to visit an old historical Catholic Church, Misión San Ignacio Kadakaamán, built in 1728. I am so glad we made the stop.



Notice the stairs to the left of the tower to access the bells



Town square, the roads on both sides are unpaved, you really travel back in time in this quaint little town!





We continued north, leaving "Baja Sur" and entering just "Baja."



It is interesting, Baja Sur roads are like Texas roads, well paved and maintained, while Baja roads are like Oklahoma roads, just so, so. Because there is little traffic, you can weave between the lanes and pot holes.



Further up the road, a few kilometers from Ensenada, we got to the construction zone. This time, we were not so lucky and we lost about 1 hour waiting our turn to go through. The construction and delays were massive.



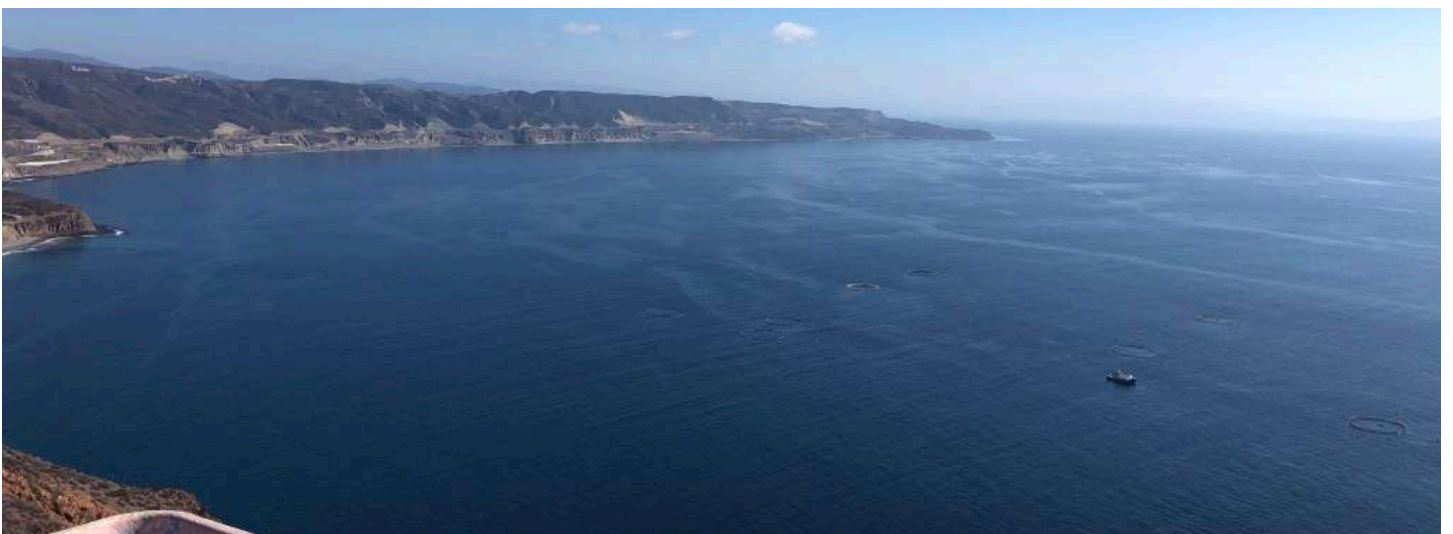
In Ensenada, you could be in “any city” in the USA, look at the store signs, Starbucks, McDonalds, Home Depot, OfficeMax, Walmart, 7 Eleven, etc. You name it and they have it, including the traffic.



Once on ruta 3, northwest of Ensenada, the city cleaned up nicely. Beautiful resorts and far away from the hustle and bustle of downtown. The toll road to Tijuana is a 4-lane divided highway along the coast, beautifully maintained with lots of lazy sweepers that make motorcycling so much fun. The only distraction is the gorgeous landscape.



They had a rest area that could easily hold a few hundred travelers and a great view.



The border crossing to the USA in Tijuana can be lengthy, so we opted to go cross in Tecate. We spend our last few pesos having lunch in Tecate and walk around the Plaza. Retro photo to match the timeless quote “the respect of the rights of others is peace” by Benito Juarez.



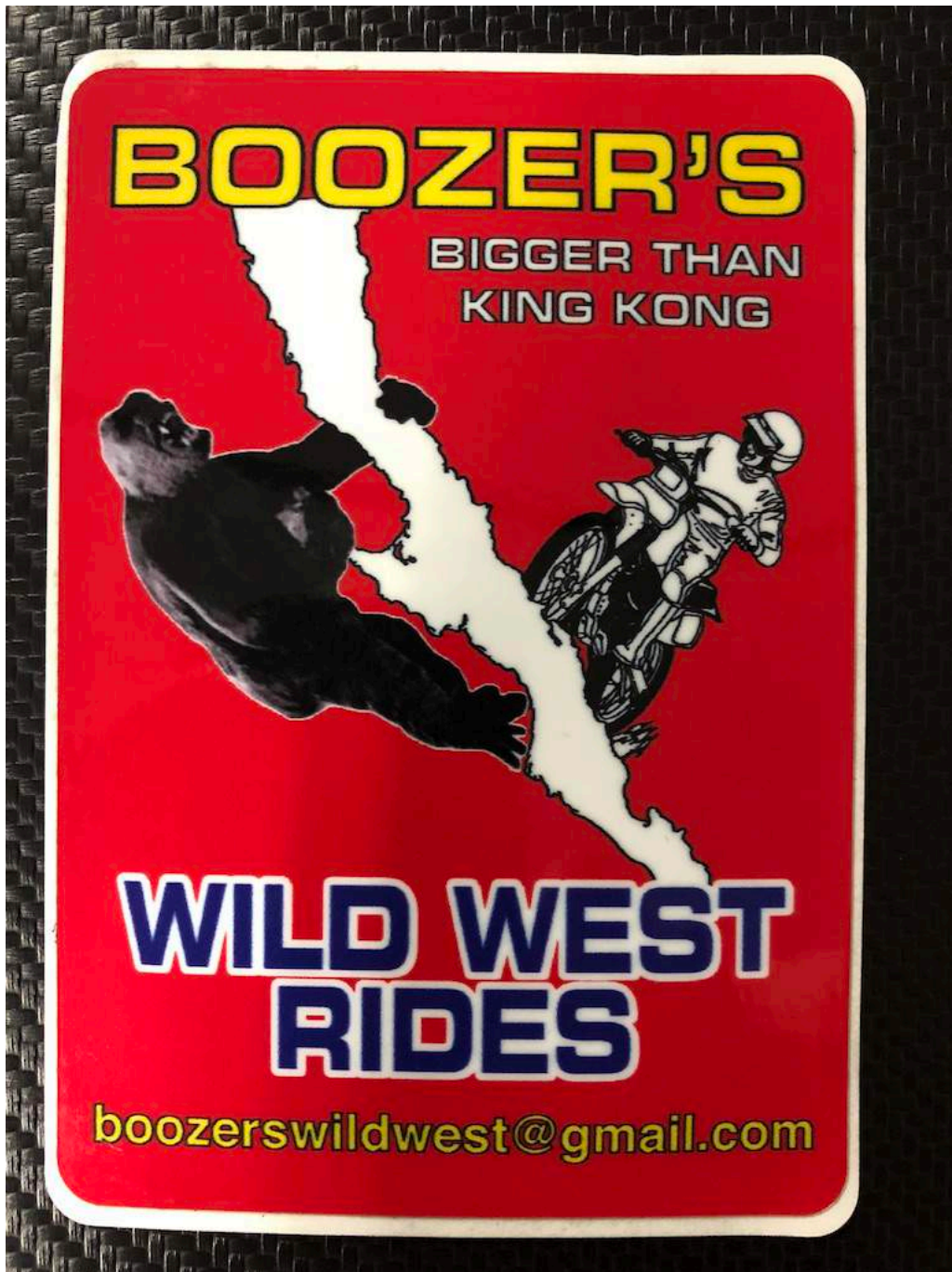
With the “motorcycle shortcut”, the process took 15 minutes, (note: make sure you activate your Global Entry card prior to using it) and as always, it was awesome to be back in the USA.

**Day 12 – El Cajon, CA to USC in Los Angeles, CA, 137 miles, Wednesday
11/07/18**

Last night we were hosted by Boozer (Steve's last name and BTW he does not drink), Tracy, and American Airlines' Captain Pat, who was also staying at their home. This morning, I was able to borrow all the stuff to change the oil and filter on my bike, which was much needed for my trip home.

Pat kindly paid for our dinner last night and this morning Tracy and Boozer cooked breakfast for us: coffee, eggs, fruit, bacon, bagels, you name it and they had it. (And I thought Mexico was cheap, haha). What gracious hosts. Thank you again Pat, Tracy and Boozer!

This is Boozer's motorcycle sticker, careful he sticks them everywhere



And lastly a pre-departure selfie



The ride from San Diego to Los Angeles was easy, mid-day so little traffic, and only 137 miles.

I was excited when I left for USC to visit Christina, there were 3 things she wanted me to do for/with her. Her wish is my command

Car tires a bit chewed up



Eat Sushi at Sugarfish and Brunch – both delicious and not “chewy”



I was very happy to visit with her and spend some time together. USC is beautiful, some pictures



Day 13 – Los Angeles, CA to Buckeye,AZ 344 miles, Thursday 11/08/18

It was sad leaving Christina, but she will be home for Thanksgiving in a couple of week, the ride home from LA is about 1,500 miles. FIGHT ON



Riding out of LA was rather painless, (late morning). I was hoping to get near Phoenix and was glad to get there just about dusk. The ever-elusive CA-AZ border, the Colorado river.



Someone asked me how I carry 2 weeks' worth of clothing in my pannier. I don't, I wash my smalls and riding shirts in the sink before dinner, and they are dry by morning.



Day 14 – Buckeye, AZ to Ruidoso Downs, NM, 542 miles, Friday 11/09/18

As I looked at routing, I decided to skip Phoenix and its traffic. I rode south to Gila Bend to Interstate-10 East. Tired of the Interstate slab, I decided to reroute in Las Cruces and take Hwy 70 to Ruidoso and eventually to Hwy 380.

The idea was great until I started to get into some elevation, while the roads were beautiful and varied, some towns did not have through roads and it was stop and go. The temps got really chilly as the day wore on, down to 36-38 degrees. When I finally got to my hotel, I was pretty cold and happy to get off the bike.

Lots of train traffic.



Missiles and wildlife, need to be alert when you ride, LOL.



I was not aware the NM claimed to be the “Chile Capital of the World”. It reminded me of Chile, the country, not the hot chilies...



A hearty spinach dinner salad at K-BOB'S Steakhouse, to warm up.



Day 15 – Ruidoso Downs, NM to Home, 562 miles, Saturday 11/10/18

I woke up to a super cold morning, 28°F, and while I was ready to head home, I did not want to hit a patch of ice. I patiently waited a couple of hours, had a leisurely breakfast and surfed the internet. At around 8:30 AM, the temp was 36° so I headed out.

Traveling east is always a bummer, you lose an hour through every time zone and you have the sun in your eyes for a couple of hours each morning.

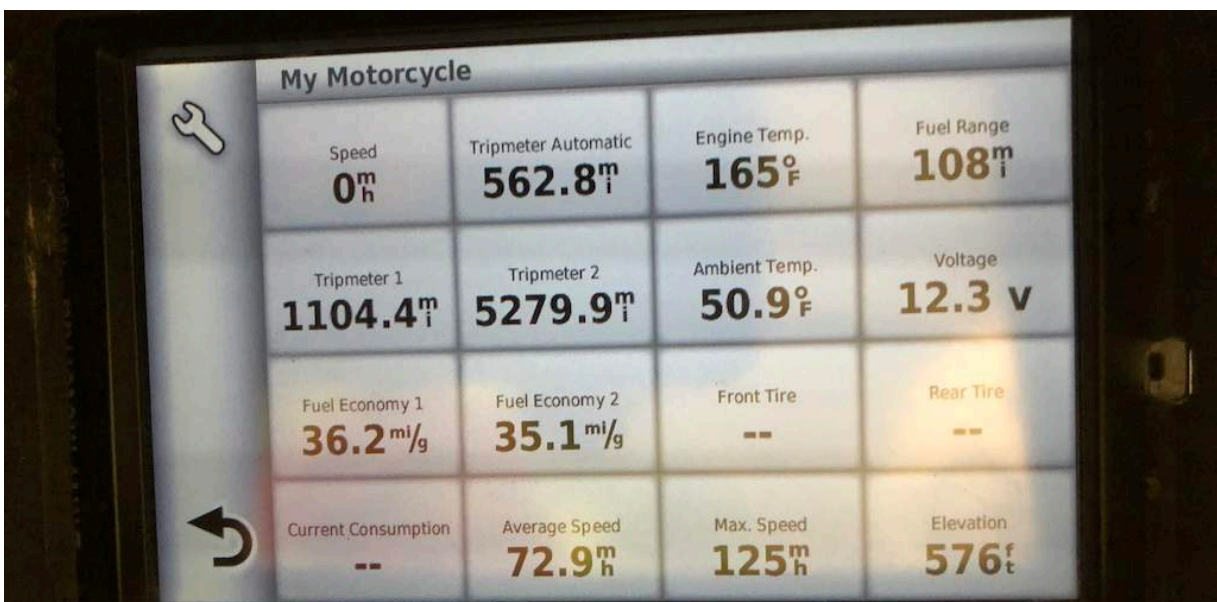
The ride was cold, but I was ready to get home. As I got near Dallas, the temps climbed a bit, but not much over the mid 50's. I took very short break as it was a borderline late dusk/night arrival. Once I got on Hwy 380, the speed limit increased to 75mph and you can borrow 6-9mph, so the miles went by quickly.



Glad that I killed my shared of mosquitoes, my screen light was clean when I left Ruidoso Downs.



By the time I got home, it was darker than I like and I was tired, but very glad to get off the bike for a while. Final info screenshot, total trip miles 5,279.9.



Last but not least, final thoughts...

First of all, many thanks to my riding partner, Nick Graves. The entire trip was so much more enjoyable knowing we had each other's back.

Mexico (at least Baja) is very safe and their highways are good. After this experience I would do this trip solo, there was never a moment that I felt concerned. The people are very humble and happy with very little.

There is so much to explore that we barely scratched the surface, I would do a motorhome trip with a kayak and a bicycle. There is so much to culture to soak in, one could spend weeks there.

Thanks to Nick, here is my welcome to Mexico sign:



And to keep the memories flowing, here is my prominently displayed motorcycle sticker



Want to guess where I will go next summer? Send me a note. Thanks for reading...AB