

# **So are you interested in riding to Sturgis 2008?**

**Mike Edwards**

I am...and I'm going...again. I have made my motel reservations for the trip on the way out and back-taking the same route I did in 2007. Columbia to Paducah, Kentucky. Paducah to Council Bluffs, Iowa. Council Bluffs to Sturgis, South Dakota. 4066 miles round trip and it's only 6 months away.

It would be fun to have a group from Thunder Tower going together but this is not a ride for the faint of heart or behinds. With an average of 600 miles per day, staying in Motel 6's and eating gas station hot dogs when we stop, this will be your basic bare bones ride. You will be surprised at how sore you can be from just sitting all day. I lost feeling in the thumb on my right hand for 3 months after I returned last time. If you're a new or novice rider you might want to consider waiting until next year or hauling your bike.

## **On the road to Sturgis.....**

As it stands today I will be leaving on Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> at 7am and will be traveling interstate all the way out and all the way back. No problems with gas stations, food, lodging, etc. Should this trip go as well as it did last year I will have no complaints. If any of you read the article I wrote and Thunder Tower Harley-Davidson posted on the website, it was a nearly perfect ride. Only had rain twice. Once on the way out for a few miles and once on the way back for much longer. I don't stop for rain. If I stop I'm not getting where I'm going. I will pull over if it looks like the rain is set-in, put on my gear and then it's back on the road. Like I said as it stands today, my plans can change as easily as yours.

I will be leaving from my house however if I know we have a group, we can meet at the PitStop Shell gas station on Spears Creek Road across from TTHD. Again it's KSU (kickstands up) at 7am.

The motels I stay at are right off the interstate with easy access. If you're interested in going let me know and I will provide you with a list of the ones I have booked. Again it's basic. A place to sleep for the night and a shower to wash away the day's ride. Several restaurants are within walking distance. At the end of the day I may have a beer or two with dinner but will be walking to the restaurant and back to the motel. You want to drink and drive you ride alone or at least not with me. Sorry this is not a babysitting service.

And on that note, make sure your bike is ready for the trip. Have it serviced. Check all lights, horn, etc. Make sure your tires have enough tread to make it there and back. Black Hills Harley-Davidson is a full service dealership in Rapid City but you don't want to waste a whole day getting a new tire installed. As you can imagine they are very busy this time of year. We will be sharing cell phone numbers so if something does happen you will be able to contact another rider. As well, everyone will have our route information so that if you fall behind you can catch-up to the group at the next overnight stop. We will make best effort to stay together.

I usually stop between 175-200 miles for fuel and a snack. If your bike needs to fill-up more often let me know but I would prefer that we not stop any sooner than 150 miles. If your ride won't do 150 on a tank you may want to trailer. I do the speed limit, maybe a mile or two over but that's it. You want to go faster...I'll see you at the motel and good luck.

## **You in???**

Understand I am not trying to organize a group. I'm not telling anyone where to stay, when to ride or for how far. I have had several people express an interest in going and am giving my information. This is my itinerary, when I stop, where I stop, etc. The only thing I can tell you for sure is that at 6:59am on August 1<sup>st</sup> I will be sitting in the parking lot of the PitStop Shell station with my motor running. At 7:00am I will be pulling out of that same parking lot and getting on I-20. If I'm the only one there that's how I'm going. If anybody else shows up they are welcome to join me but you need to have your own motel reservations, campground reservations and agenda. If at the end of the day you want to ride another 100 miles and find a motel that's up to you. If you want to stop sooner that's OK also. I will see you in Sturgis.

I don't keep a schedule; I don't even take a watch. We are usually at the motel around 5-6pm every night. That leaves plenty of time to eat and relax for the next day's ride.

We will arrive in Sturgis on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The campsite where I stay is the Rush-No-More at exit 37 on I-90. I try to get there early enough to setup the tent and get halfway settled in before dark. Again you need to make your own reservations and the sooner the better. Check their website for phone numbers. This is just the one where I stay. There are many, many more. This campsite is very quiet. No parties or loud music playing 24/7. I did bring earplugs to help me sleep. I have a tent, sleeping bag, mattress and just enough stuff to get me thru the 4 days I'll be there. I have a packing list that I used last year and have modified. If anyone wants a copy send, me an e-mail. The campsite is great and family owned. All tree covered and plenty of grassy areas for tents. The cost is \$18.00 per day with a 3-day minimum. They do have a refund policy up to a certain date. There are flush toilets along with several porta-pottys, showers, restaurant, pool, hot-tub, bar and loads of friendly people. But even at 6am you'll stand in line if you want to shower.

Once we get to Sturgis everyone's on his or her own so if you want to party all night and sleep all day that is your business. I plan on seeing some sights. Last year I did see Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse and Devils Tower. I am sure I will do the same thing this year but also want to work in the Badlands. I spent one day in Sturgis but it's the same as any other rally, vendors, vendors and more vendors. Still if your going to ride that far you'll want to experience what it's all about. I would highly recommend that if you want to see Sturgis at night (and who doesn't) there is a bus service called "DaBus" for \$5.00 one way they will pick you up at the campsite and take you downtown. For another \$5.00 they will take you back. Well worth the money and much less expensive than a DUI. Sturgis at night is a horse of a different color and not to be missed.

As you can imagine there are a ton of bars in the area. Some of the more famous ones being, Full Throttle, One-Eyed-Jacks and Broken Spoke. Full Throttle bills itself as the largest biker bar in the world and is outside of town but DaBus will take you from Sturgis there and back for a fee. Again \$5.00 one-way.

## **Just a Few Suggestions:**

1. Wear whatever riding gear is comfortable for you. I wear jeans, tennis shoes and depending on the temperature a long sleeve shirt and jean jacket. Long sleeve shirt mainly so I don't get sunburned. The jean jacket I bought at the flea market for \$15.00. I was not going to take my \$500.00 leather H-D jacket and let someone steal it. Not that they would but why present the temptation.
2. Drink lots of water and keep the sunscreen on. My typical stop was gas, bathroom, snack, water, sunscreen and check the map.
3. Bring some cash. While in Sturgis, especially at night, it is just too hectic to try and run a credit card everytime you want a beer. And they are not going to keep a tab, too many people. Just lay your \$4.00 on the counter and enjoy. Most vendors except for the Mom & Pop stands took a credit card no problem. Note\* the beer at the campsite was \$2.00 for draft Bud.
4. Bring your DOT approved helmet. We will be going thru states that do have a helmet law. South Dakota does not require helmets if you're over 18 and if you don't have a windscreen they do require eye protection. Bring your sunglasses or goggles.
5. If you want you can ship a package to the campground. Last year I hauled everything with me. This year I am packing my duffle bag with what I don't need for the ride out and shipping it a week early. It cost me \$40.00 to ship 40lbs ground with UPS. Last year UPS had a station setup at Black Hills H-D in Rapid City. I was able to ship from there back home.
6. Keep your rain gear with you. Stuff it in a saddlebag or whatever. The storms can come up quick.
7. Bring flip-flops (shower shoes), a towel and take the soap from the motels. None of this is provided at the campsite. Have a bag with all your toiletries in it so you can just grab that when you're ready to hit the showers.
8. Bring your ac adapters for your cell phones, PDA, etc. There is a power strip down by the restaurant. You can plug in while eating breakfast or showering. Nobody's going to bother it. The campsite does have wireless access but it costs extra and I found it not very reliable. I was using a PDA and had trouble connecting. Maybe a laptop would work better. I saw several people with theirs.

9. At night in the campground it gets DARK. There are no external lights other than around the bar area and that is a walk from where I camped. I found myself groping around trying to find my tent late at night. Bring a maglight or something else to see with.
10. I brought a collapsible water jug. That way I could just wash my face or brush my teeth at the tent without having to stand in line. You can get them at any of the outdoor stores locally.
11. While I did see a few children in Sturgis and the surrounding area, this is not a family trip. There's a lot of hard drinking, a lot of great looking women (some you see more of than others), a lot of bikes of all sorts and pretty rough conditions. But you know your children better than I do.

At the end of the trip, August 7<sup>th</sup> I will break camp and stay at a motel in Rapid City. It is nice to have a room to myself, a good steak dinner and a long hot shower. I am able to mentally prepare for the ride home. Again if you're interested I will include the information in the packet.

Speaking of the bikes, I saw everything imaginable. From full dress Honda Gold Wings that you could hardly hear when they were running to dirt bikes and customs to the guy a couple of tents down on a Harley that the pipes couldn't have been more than 2 foot long. When he started it the whole camp shook. This is not a Harley event. This is a motorcycle rally. Yes, it is predominately Harleys but all are welcome. I never heard a harsh word or a derogatory statement to or about anyone.

### **An experience you don't want to miss....**

I completely enjoyed my ride last year, which is why I'm going again. I felt safe. Nobody bothered any of my belongings even tho the tent was open. I would sit down at a bar and before you know it would strike up a conversation with the people around me. Friendly people, people like me that came to experience Sturgis and the surrounding area. People that I had something in common with. We had rode thousands of miles to see the sights, relax and just get away from the hustle and bustle of the everyday routine. For this week we were the cowboys, the explorers, the renegades that controlled our own lives. You will see some of the prettiest parts of the country you can imagine. From the rolling hills in North Carolina and Tennessee to the long and straight rides across Iowa to the changing colors of the Black Hills in South Dakota. Take it for what it is and enjoy. I guarantee this is a ride you will never forget.

If you want to talk further or have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at:  
[Mike508@bellsouth.net](mailto:Mike508@bellsouth.net).

Thanks and I hope we can ride together soon.  
Mike Edwards