Sat 6/9 660 miles Phoenix to Fort Stockton TX. Ending mileage 811. Took I10 AZ to NM into El Paso about 5pm. Scoped the huge lighted 15ft high border fence and Mexico entry gateway in El Paso right at the edge of the highway and abutting the west end of the city. Subway sandwiches for dinner in El Paso and then pressed on about 250 miles SE to Fort Stockton. Ran through Border Patrol / Customs checkpoint with dogs and everything a little east of Van Horn. Stayed at Sleep Suites in Fort Stockton after finding Holiday Inn Express and Comfort Suites full. Mileage is 660 today.

Sat 6/10 7:30am Start in Stockton TX, mileage 811. Breakfast was included at hotel, took coffees for the road. Huge, huge wind farms in Bakersfield for miles and miles. Easily over 100 of those 3-blade giant windmills. From there I10 East to San Antonio slowly changed from looking like New Mexico to being green and hilly with a few palm trees. The desert changed to a rocky hilly area and almost to elevations of 2000 feet at times. Ed mentioned that The Alamo was in San Antonio so we decided to divert briefly and grabbed a Subway sandwich (this has got to be the slowest Subway in the south…) for lunch and then drove into downtown with it and ate in front of The Alamo and the monument. Photos. Departed 1pm for Houston and between SA and Houston Ed mentions from past XC experiences that this part of TX looks like Oklahoma. Ed naps in passenger seat while Bruce pilots the F150 through Beaumont TX and crosses into Louisiana about 5:30pm or so and cruised through Lake Charles and Lafayette and then over the miles and miles of raised highway through the swamps heading into Baton Rouge. Stayed at Marriott Fairfield Inn in Baton Rouge and ate Cajun (“coon ass” cuisine called “Creole” by those with class) at Copelands. Mileage 1604 (793 today).

Mon 6/11: 6:45am start in Baton Rouge LA, mileage is 1604. I10. Fog burned off as we got close to New Orleans but traffic was awful. The scenery was cool though, especially the lengthy bridge over Lake Pontchartrain and all of the swamp living. Saw the New Orleans Superdome now labeled the Mercedez-Benz Superdome (they must have paid for the Katrina repairs…). Ed and I used his iPhone ( I gotta get one of those…) to determine if a Bourbon Street adventure would take too much time. We went for it and had a grand time scoping out Bourbon St and all of the “Bead Balconies” from Mardi Gras. We went down to the water hoping to see levees but not the case in that area. Shortly out of NO our east route on I10 ended and we took I59 northeast over the border and into Mississippi. MS is quite nice looking from the highway, green and lush. We ate another Subway lunch in Meridian MS (as it turns out THIS is the slowest Subway in the south…) and I took over navigation. I took a poor photo of the Alabama border sign but an acceptable one of the Welcome Center sign. We pressed on northeast up through Birmingham and then through heavy downpours. We stopped at the last exit in Alabama prior to the Georgia border to take a bio break and to actually ensure that we set foot on Alabama soil. Next we continued briefly through the corner of northwest Georgia (didn’t even have a “Welcome to….” Sign…) into Chattanooga TN where we again encountered blinding downpours. We got off of I59 onto I75 in Chattanooga and continued northeast until just south of Knoxville where we departed on Rt 68 east to Sweetwater and then got Route 411 north into Alcoa. We stayed at the Country Inn Suites in Alcoa and tried to find “Tennessee fare” or “Country food” and were directed to Ryan’s Buffet for dinner. We caught some sleep in order to start early in hopefully clear weather to find Route 129 southeast just outside of Alcoa, which of course is the renowned motorcycling road, “The Tail of the Dragon” through Deals Gap down to the southern end of the Blue Ridge Parkway in NC. Ending mileage: 2272, 668 miles today.

Tuesday 6/12: 07:00am start, mileage 2272. We start the day on Rt 129 in cloudy but clear weather. It isn’t long before the joy ride is underway. We should be on motorcycles…this road is an absolute amusement park ride. You’d have to see/experience it to believe it, there is nothing else like it in this country. 30 miles into the ride we get to the southern end of the Tail of the Dragon at the Deals Gap Motorcycle Resort. We take pics and buy small souvenirs and move on taking Rt 28 South to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Which is more of the same although not quite as radical, but it’s a narrow single lane road twisting up onto the Smokey Mountains then onto the Blue Ridge Mountains and riding the ridge crest. Fascinating, spectacular, mesmerizing, scenic when not in the fog. Slow. We’d had enough about 60 miles into the 469 mile parkway so we exited into Asheville shortly after lunch and made adjustments. We headed west from Asheville up I26 to I81 to make time up to the northern end of the Blue Ridge in Virginia where we hopped back on at the very end of the Blue Ridge Parkway where it joins Skyline Drive and drove about 30 miles or so up Skyline Drive (of the 105 miles…) to finish off the ‘scenic route’ day. We ended up at the Comfort Inn in Woodstock VA and ate at Joe’s Steakhouse. Ending mileage 2897 totaling 625 miles on the day, which is not bad considering the slow work on the ridgeline roads.

Wednesday 07:00am Start. Starting mileage 2897. Back on I81 north out of Virginia into West Virginia then into Delaware then into Pennsylvania. Rode I81 all the way to Scranton PA where we then headed northeast on I84 through NY into CT and then the typical commute home from Hartford through MA and NH. Ending mileage 3473, so 576 miles on the day. Shortest mileage day, most states = 8 !