

Shenandoah Weekend Ride

Rick Leighton

The Shenandoah ride, the weekend of July 25, 2025, was a great time. It was made possible by Linda Knowles, our Chapter Director and one of our Road Captains.

For a time, the planned ride was in doubt. Weather forecasts predicted a high chance of heavy rain. But as the departure date approached, the weather gods seemed to take pity on us—or so we thought. More on that later. For now, it meant 24 people on 16 Harleys would be heading out for three days of great riding.

We all met at our usual gathering spot (Newtown Rd. Wawa), and by 8:30 AM, we were KSU (kickstands up) and on our way in two groups. One was led by Linda and swept by Tom Sanchez, our Senior Road Captain. The other group was led by me and swept by Matt Woods. The skies were mostly sunny with temperatures in the mid-80s—not a bad day for riding. We headed west, sticking to back roads and making good time. Lunch was in Ashland—Mexican, nothing fancy, but very good. By the time we headed to our next destination (Stonewall Harley-Davidson), the temperatures had climbed into the upper 90s with a heat index in the triple digits. Everyone was dressed for the heat and had plenty of water or Gatorade packed, so this wasn't a problem.

Stonewall Harley-Davidson is a nice, relatively new building in Ruckersville, Virginia. The dealership is nice and new. People wandered around, and most picked up a coin, shirt, or something with the dealership's name on it. Many of us signed in for Harley points.

Let's backtrack a bit. Remember when I said the weather gods had taken pity on us? Well, not so much. The skies turned black, and we decided to hang out at the dealership until the storm passed, which took about an hour. In the meantime, Dee Sanchez found a freezer stocked with all kinds of ice cream. Well, the stampede was on. We hit those frozen treats with a vengeance. With bellies satisfied, most lounged around, and some took naps—myself included.

When the storm had passed, we got on our bikes and headed out for the last few miles to the Quality Inn in Harrisonburg. We arrived a little after 5 PM, hot and tired. Looking forward to a swim in the hotel pool, we were, with great apology, informed that the pool was closed for repairs. Okay, a cold shower it

is. After that and a cold beer, the gang met in the hotel's lounge area for pizza and subs.

The next morning, people were wiping down their bikes from the previous night's rain. By 8 AM, it was already hot and muggy. That, however, didn't deter us from enjoying the day's events. We headed out in the same two groups as the previous day. Linda's route was excellent, offering a diverse view of the Shenandoah Valley region.



A couple of hours later, we arrived at Shenandoah Caverns, a privately owned attraction. On the same property, there's a museum called An American Celebration, which houses a diverse display of floats from past parades and

presidential inaugural events. I, along with a half-dozen others, opted for the museum tour instead of the cavern tour. Everyone who went really enjoyed it. Our tour guide was excellent and very knowledgeable. The tour lasted about an hour, but we were encouraged to walk around afterward.



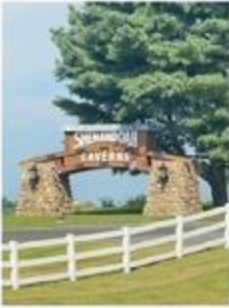
The next stop on our day's ride wasn't planned, but since it was just a short distance down the road, we ended up at a potato chip factory. They definitely have some good chips. I believe the crowd favorite was the BBQ chips. After that detour, we took the long way to lunch. Some folks ate at the Sheetz stop, while others went across the street to Burger King or Subway. The next stop was a place Linda had spent much time at during her "misspent youth," as she described it. If you want to know more about that, just ask her.

We got back to the hotel just as it started to rain. Dinner was at Texas Roadhouse. We went in two groups to make seating easier. As one group was being seated, the other was heading out the door—they had no wait. Unfortunately, our group had to wait about 75 minutes. Some would argue we should have gone somewhere else, but with the rain, we decided to wait it out. The server was very good, and the food was the typical Roadhouse quality. All in all, it was a good experience.

It was another hot and muggy morning when we woke up on Sunday. We all met at the IHOP down the street—the hotel breakfast left much to be desired. After breakfast, we headed home via the direct route, taking a few back roads until we hit I-64 East. The rest of the trip home was uneventful—well, almost. Remember when I said the gods took pity on us, but not really? Besides the hot

and muggy triple-digit weather for the past three days, they had one last surprise for me. As we were getting into Norfolk, the weather turned fast—dark clouds, thunder, and lightning. Lots of lightning. As my group slowly broke off until we hit the I-64/I-264 interchange, I was by myself. Going down I-264, as I got closer to Mt. Trashmore, the skies opened up, and within seconds, I was soaked to the bone and could barely see the front of my bike. I made it home wet but in one piece. I checked in with the rest of my group to make sure they made it home okay. Turns out, they all managed to get home before the rain. I called Linda to see how her group fared—same answer. Where am I going with this? I have no idea. I just thought it was funny how things turned out and wanted to share.

Thanks to Linda and Tom for the trip. I had a great time. Special thanks to Dee for the fantastic photos she was able to get. Thanks to Matt for keeping me and the group safe. To everyone else who came along, thanks for the fun times.



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