

Recap of the National Corvette Museum Trip attended by the Sam Houston Corvette Club

September 23rd – 28th, 2015

So, as the newly appointed NCM Ambassador (at the beginning of the year), I felt it was important to speak from experience. I had never been to the Museum nor really knew about it. I started to do some research. I studied past newsletters, started absorbing all I could off the NCM website, spoke to other SHCC members, etc. I decided shortly after my appointment, that I should take a trip there. I started to ask around to see if there was interest in going and there seemed to be.



Our Stone at the NCM Entrance.

So, I asked the membership who would want to make such a trip – 1600+ miles, 4 days. Was I surprised to get 15 cars and 26 people! I thought “what did I just sign up for”!

I’d led a couple of ½ day trips but I knew this would be a much bigger commitment. 3 Cities, 4 nights of Hotels to arrange, lots of driving requiring pit stops and meals. I also wanted to try and get in as much as I could with the little bit of non-driving time we were in for.

So, I got to working through the Hotels. It took a while but, all things considered, worked out pretty well. I was able to get decent rooms and decent prices. The first night, Wednesday night, we stayed in W. Memphis, AR at the Knights Inn.

Yeah, I thought the same thing too! W. Memphis? Knights Inn? Hope these people trust me!

I called and spoke to Mike (the Owner). Mike was really cool and wanted us to stay there. He said it wasn’t your typical Knights Inn, he was ex-military, and had lots of friends on the force. He wasn’t kidding!

I think they came through there about every 30 minutes. Rooms were clean and renovated, but the best part was the following morning, when I went to get my “continental” breakfast and found someone cooking omelets on the spot! Thought it was going to be Frosted Flakes and a banana.



Knights Inn, W. Memphis, AR

During the initial planning stages, Ronnie Celeste emailed me and said he was thinking of stopping in Graceland at some point as part of his plans. I checked quickly and saw that Graceland was pretty much on the way to the NCM. I decided to work that in and asked Ronnie to coordinate that effort (i.e. tickets, etc.). He took the ball and ran with it! Within a couple of days, he had all the details, arranged the tickets, and collected the money! It was nice to have that piece covered.

Graceland was a trip! I had been a casual fan of the King but, soon after the tour, went on to iTunes and downloaded a Hunka, Hunka Burning Love and several more! Seeing how his career came to be, his military life, and hearing of the words of his daughter on the audio tour, really helped connect with the memories. Quite the compound; there was a separate building for all of his cars and bikes.



After Graceland, a great take I highly recommend, we finished our trip to Bowling Green. We arrived around 5PM Thursday, and checked in to the Red Roof Inn. Not a bad place but, not deserving of the 4 stars I saw on Trip Advisor! I guess I got lucky with the Knights Inn, but not so much this time! Wasn't horrible but no elevator which I had not calculated for ☹️. I think those ratings might have been padded a bit!!

So, we got up Friday morning for our full day of the Museum. After paying and badging in, our first stop was the assembly plant. Over 1 Million square feet of Corvette! We saw where the engines are assembled, body panels getting paint, doors being assembled and installed, the body getting fitted to the frame, where the cars come off the line and, although some of us can say our cars have never seen rain, they've seen plenty of water during the leak test!!



We were then sent over to the Café where we had a better than expected, box lunch. Following that, it was time for a group photo which came out really good! Most of our group purchased the photo I believe. Next, it was on to the Museum itself.

The museum had so many cars, most every year was represented, including the 1983. There were 43 1983 Vettes made, and 42 were destroyed by GM! The one remaining only remains because one GM Engineer hid the car, covered in a field, where it was eventually rediscovered. After the tour of the Museum, it looked like we were going to have to wait to get on the track at the Motorsports park.



At that point, I remembered I needed to get a pic of our new Banner hanging in the parking lot.



I went and asked the receptionist if there was any chance we could get on the track a little earlier since we had been told that there was a race going on or something which meant a late day. She called over to the track and found out the other event had ended early. That's all we had to hear!

We lined up and paid for what I was told were "touring laps". 4 Laps, \$45. I was already wondering if some were going to be disappointed. We talked to the pace car driver and he said "if y'all can keep up, we'll keep picking it up"! We lined up behind him and off we went. Somewhat slowly, (~70) at first. Then we kicked it up a notch! I got to 97mph in the straightaway! Rumor has it, a couple of us pushed 115!! Mike Murski made the biggest donation to the track! 3 tours. The track was nothing like I expected – better than expected – just like the whole trip had been.

That evening, Friday night, I thought a group dinner was in order since I knew some folks were headed in different directions in the Morning. I needed a food and beverage director to take over and make arrangements, pick the restaurant, etc. I waited for the first person to speak up – Thank you Lynn Knox! She had spotted a place down the road that looked good called "Rafferty's". She hit a home run! The food and drink was tremendous.

Sadly, the journey had to start coming to an end. The next morning (Saturday), a group of us saddled up for the journey home. Some continued on to other places, some hung around for a couple more days and some iron-butters took it on home that same day.

Our smaller group stopped in Baton Rouge for the night before finishing the journey home on Sunday. We stopped at a great seafood place and had one last big meal and watched A&M win in OT. That topped off a great trip (sorry Longhorn fans).

We met up in the morning, made a couple of stops along the way together, and then split up to finish the ride home.

Since then, I've seen some great pics, and got plenty of good, positive feedback on our time.

It was my pleasure to lead this group and put this together. I also appreciate those who contributed. Charlie and Lois "swept up" the entire trip and provided survival goody bags for all. Others helped with coordination, planning and past experiences. I know that I could have asked for more help and would have got it from these people.

Dave Andreotti

NCM Ambassador

SHCC