

After taking some clients to Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, I decided to take the "back roads" home.

Living in Sarasota, I sometimes tire of driving the freeways so I exited I-75 just west of Fort Lauderdale on US 27 and proceeded north. I live on the west coast of Florida and had never traveled through the middle of the state.

I began to be pleasantly surprised, the landscape quickly changed to farm land. Miles and miles of very sparsely populated farm land awaited me. It reminded me of Texas combined with Indiana, flat, big sky like Texas, with the green vegetation of Indiana.

I drove approximately 70 miles passing through nothing but sugar cane fields, it seemed like I drove 20 miles through the King Ranch, it was harvest time so many produce laden trucks were on their way to the processing plants.

I was getting a little concerned as both my stomach and gas tank was getting empty and there didn't seem to be a gas station anywhere, either for my stomach or my car.

As I approached South Bay, the first town for miles, the crop of choice changed from sugar cane to citrus with miles and miles of citrus trees lining the landscape.

South Bay sits on the south edge of Lake Okeechobee; it is a quaint, pretty little town, with a lot of emphasis on "little." I was through it in the blink of an eye, still no gas station or restaurant!

The lake can't be seen from the highway, although there are plenty of places to pull off where the lake could be observed. However my stomach kept calling me so I drove on, I will do the scenic tour next time.

The next town on the agenda happened to be Clewiston, "The sweetest little town in America", as the sign proudly states as I enter the city limits. Although this is the corporate headquarters of the United States Sugar Cane Corp., it is still rather small.

Luckily for me the first business in town was a gas station and the second was a Sonny's Bar-B-Cue, the home of barbecue chicken, pork, and beef, top it off with garlic bread and a salad bar and it has the potential for some darn good eatin". If you are in the mood for good barbecue this is the place for you!

Now that my gas tank and stomach were both full, I wished I had stopped and checked out Lake Okeechobee, Oh well, next time!

Traveling north I soon came to my turn off on Hwy 70, going west the landscape remained pretty much the same, fruit trees and cattle.

Arcadia is the only town of any size; it does have restaurants and gas stations! It

was torn up pretty bad during hurricane Charley in 2004, but it looks to be totally built back. People had evacuated from the coast to Arcadia during Charley, but the hurricane turned and hit Arcadia broadside.

After leaving Arcadia and turning onto Hwy 72, it was a short ride to Sarasota and home.

All in all it was an enjoyable ride, providing a good alternative to the freeway and an opportunity to observe the "Real Florida", as the natives reminisce about how things were before all the Yankees invaded!

Believe it or not, I made the trip in about 3 1/2 hours, not counting the lunch stop, which is about how long it would have taken me on I-75.