

# Mardi Gras of motorcycling



Bikers stake out their territory in Virginia City. Photo/Brenda Knox

**By Brenda Knox**

RENO – There is nothing like the rumble of loud pipes and the smell of leather to let you know you're in motorcycle heaven.

Ever since getting my Harley in May, I've been looking forward to Street Vibrations Reno 2009. Since it's in my backyard, it was an event I did not want to miss. Street Vibrations ran Wednesday through Sunday, but I couldn't get away that long so settled for Saturday and Sunday with an overnight in Reno.

We headed over to the Carson City Harley Davidson dealership about 9:30am Saturday. It was a bit chilly leaving from Lake Tahoe so we donned full gloves and jackets. By the time we reached Carson City it was in the high 70s and off came the jackets.

The dealership was filled with bikes; traffic monitors effectively got us into a great parking area. Vendors, food, and music were all going strong, even at 10:30 in the morning. We stayed long enough to walk the parking lot, check out all

the bikes, shop for and buy a communications system, and share a Hawaiian shaved ice.

Onward to Virginia City. It seemed to be where all of us were headed. Virginia City on the Saturday of Street Vibrations is the Motorcycle Mardi Gras. The streets are lined with hundreds upon hundreds of motorcycles. Harleys were the brand of choice, but there was a fair share of Hondas and other brands, too.

We snagged the first parking slot we saw; near the top of town. Before venturing down into town we stopped at the Cafe del Rio for lunch.

I have been to Virginia City many times and have always eaten in town at one of those diner type places – never again. Cafe del Rio has the best food in town. Roni had steak tacos; I had the Mahi Mahi tacos. Both were served with rice and black beans and very yummy. We'll be going back.

The windows of the Cafe del Rio open up onto the street so we could watch all the motorcycles and the characters ride by. One woman was dressed all in pink, several of the guys had adorned their bikes with scantily clad women, and the Mardi Gras beads started to fly.

Virginia City really welcomes all of us bikers, and by all of us I mean all ages, all sizes, all origins, all kinds of bikes. The only criteria seemed to be you must have fun.

The hot dogs, pulled pork sandwiches, beer and Bloody Marys were all following freely. This is a party and if you are a biker, a party not to be missed.

Not only are the streets lined with the most beautiful bikes you have seen, but there is a continuous parade of motorcycles riding up and down the main street. The streets are lined with partygoers trying to get women to expose themselves for those infamous beads – and many oblige.

Roni and I decide to walk back up to our bikes and ride through town on our way in to Reno. It's a slow, clutch hand is getting stiff, kind of ride through the center of town; but so much fun and so loud you can't help but get swept up in the party atmosphere.

We finally make it through town, said goodbye to the good times of Virginia City, vowing to be back next year and rode into Reno. In Reno, we pulled in to the Siena, where they appropriately had preferred parking for us motorcyclists right up front. We grabbed our stuff, checked in and headed up for showers. It was about 95 degrees and we were sweating in our chaps and leather vests.

The Street Vibrations party continues in the streets of Reno. The Siena is just outside of the main downtown area, so we were able to walk over to Virginia Street and check things out.

Wow, vendors and more vendors. Leather merchandise, any kind of accessory you could imagine for your bike. My favorite was the Hanes & Vine pipes; those pipes are awesome; but might be a bit much for my Sporty.

Street Vibrations closes South Virginia Street for blocks in downtown Reno and puts on a great party. Lots of food, music, and plenty of motorcycle accessories. We walked around and shopped for several hours. Finally decided on long sleeve souvenir T-shirts and then walked back to the Siena.

Can't wait for next year.

*Brenda Knox is a biker chick who lives in South Lake Tahoe.*