

*Great Rides!*

## Helena to Virginia City Lariat Loop

Submitted by Rob Pсурny

**Start & End Point:** Reber Park Cupola (or your choice)

**Map Link:** [ridewithgps.com/routes/2186037](http://ridewithgps.com/routes/2186037)

**Best Direction to Ride Lariat Loop:** Counter-clockwise

**Length:** 238.6 miles (121.2 day one, 117.4 day two)

**High Point:** 6,913 feet at Virginia City Hill summit

**Low Point:** 4,059 feet at Reber Park Cupola

**Cumulative Elevation Gained & Lost:** 10,916 feet

**Road Surface:** Paved. Ample shoulder except MT 287 from Sheridan to Virginia City and portions of MT 359.

**Best time to ride:** SUMMER! Remember that Virginia City is above 5700 feet in elevation, so June through August is the best time for this ride. Also, as a typical summer resort town, most of Virginia City's shops and attractions close for the season by the end of September.

**Cautions:** The loop may be ridden in either direction, but it is much safer to ride counter-clockwise. While climbing the Virginia City Hill from west to east is steeper, it is also six miles shorter than climbing from the opposite direction, and there are several pull-outs and passing lanes on the west side which make it a much safer and more enjoyable climb. Note that summer traffic to Yellowstone can often be heavy on US 287 between Norris and Harrison.

**Description:** This was designed to be a two-day ride, with approximately equal mileage each day, but it could also be ridden over four 60-mile days. Or park in Whitehall and ride the 120 mile loop. The ride was also designed to be ridden with or without SAG support, with stores and facilities at reasonable distances for water. (Helena, Boulder, Whitehall, Twin Bridges, Virginia City, Ennis, Norris, Harrison, Cardwell, Boulder, Helena) There are some significant climbs along the way, (Boulder, Virginia City and Norris Hills) but most of the route is flat to rolling. There are also great scenic views of the Madison Valley.

The route could also be altered by stopping at Boulder and Norris Hot Springs (Both are on the route), or by choosing to spend a full rest day exploring in Nevada City or Virginia City, Montana's second Territorial Capital. Historical sites abound, from a gold dredge, to log cabins, and shops on main street in Virginia City, which look much the same as they did in the 1860s. You will find museums, tours, restaurants, taverns, antique shops, art galleries, live entertainment, stagecoach rides, and more. Virginia City does levy a 3% Resort Tax from May 1 to October 1 each year, and those funds are used to maintain the infrastructure of this 1860s town.

For overnight accommodations, there are hotels, boarding houses, and B&B's in Virginia City and Nevada City. It would be best to have a reservation in the busy summer season. If you prefer to camp, there is a KOA in Alder, or you can seek out a tent or RV spot at the Virginia City Campground, about a mile east of town. You may also tent camp for free at the city park in Virginia City.

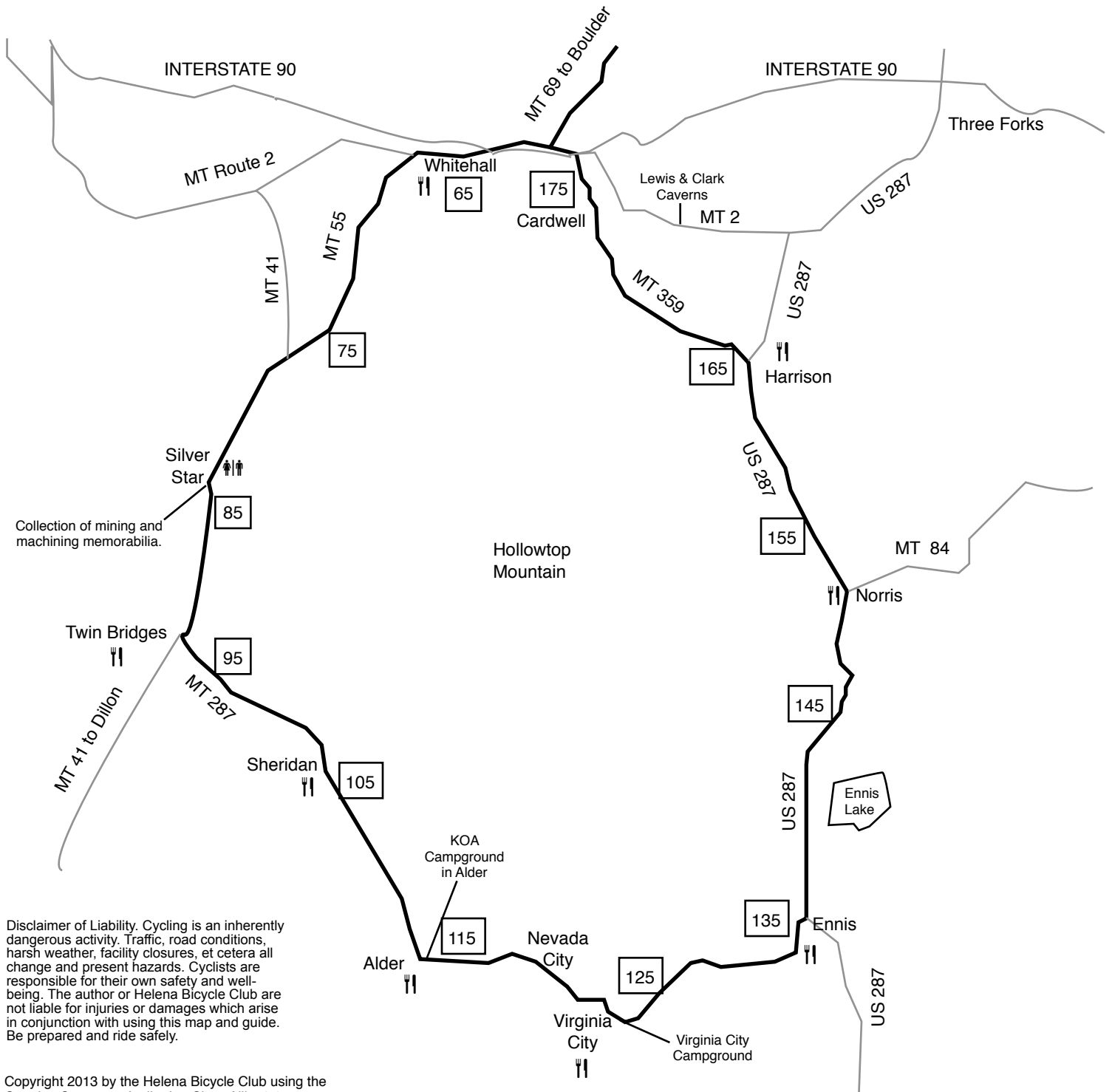
Two notes on directions. Be sure to turn left (North) at Ennis, where MONTANA 287 meets US 287. (There is a large sculpture of a fisherman at this junction) Continuing straight will route you to Hebgen Lake toward West Yellowstone. Lastly, for a water stop near Cardwell, you must travel EAST a half mile or so on MT 2 to reach a gas station & convenience store.

Begin the ride at Reber Park Cupola, or your choice of locations in Helena. Ride south on Colonial Lane to the I-15 Frontage Road. Then follow the cue sheet:

Mile	Turn	Note
15.9	R	Cross over I-15 at Jefferson City
16.0	L	Merge onto I-15 South
26.9	R	Exit 164 (MT 69) toward Boulder
27.1	L	Turn onto Main Street (MT 69)
59.4	R	Take MT 2 toward Whitehall
65.9	L	Take Rt. 55 toward Twin Bridges
77.8	S	Straight--becomes MT 41 South
92.4	S	Straight on MT 287
121.2		Arrive Virginia City
135.2	L	North on US 287 at Ennis
151.5	S	Straight on US 287 North
163.3	L	Take MT 359 toward Cardwell
178.1	S	Continue onto MT 2 West
179.3	R	Take MT 69 North to Boulder
211.5	R	Take I-15 North toward Helena
222.4	R	Take Exit 176 (Jefferson City)
222.7	R-L	Take Frontage Road to Helena

# HELENA TO VIRGINIA CITY LARIAT LOOP

Because of the length of the ride, only the southern lariat loop is shown on the map below. For a map of the complete route, please go to: [ridewithgps.com/routes/2186037](http://ridewithgps.com/routes/2186037) where you can find much more detail. Mile markers on this map are approximate and are shown as numbers within boxes. Note that the miles shown are cumulative from the beginning of the ride in Helena. (Whitehall is Mile 65) Complete mileage details are available on the map URL referenced above.



Disclaimer of Liability. Cycling is an inherently dangerous activity. Traffic, road conditions, harsh weather, facility closures, et cetera all change and present hazards. Cyclists are responsible for their own safety and well-being. The author or Helena Bicycle Club are not liable for injuries or damages which arise in conjunction with using this map and guide. Be prepared and ride safely.