

HELENA BICYCLE CLUB

helenabicycleclub.org

HBC MARCH 2013 NEWSLETTER

March 26,
2013
7 pm

Idaho
Panhandle's
Bitterroot
300k Loop,
Presenter:
Bruce Newell

Montana
Wild Center

2668
Broadwater
Avenue (south
end of Spring
Mdw Lake)

Enjoy cycling the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene?
It's twice the adventure as a loop!



Photo: Aaldrik Tiktak: Along the Milwaukee Road

At HBC's next meeting, Bruce Newell will describe a loop tour through Idaho's Panhandle. A map and description of this route is included as this month's Great Ride (next page). On Tuesday March 26th Bruce will describe this ride in detail, showing slides taken by Mark and Dee Dee Cress, our Dutch friends Aaldrik Tiktak and Caroline van der Salm, and Sue Newell when they and Bruce pedaled this loop during August 2012.

This approx. 167 mile (300k) loop¹ is worth considering because it's a relatively easy world-class multi-day tour, and just a four hours drive from Helena. You can enjoy this four or five day loop three ways: (1) As a series of supported day trips using a car shuttle; (2) Riding along from motel to motel; or (3) As a self-supported bicycle camping trip. Except between the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene and the town of St. Maries, you'll find yourself on quiet roads or bike paths. The scenery is wonderful, the hospitality grand, there's western history everywhere. This route could be completed in fewer days, or at a more leisurely pace.

The Bitterroot 300 links four multi-use trails (and a low-traffic scenic byway). Included are the Cd'A Trail, Northern Pacific Trail, Route of the Hiawatha, and the Old Milwaukee RR Trail along the St. Joe River Scenic Byway. A short, shoulder-less, and busy stretch of either Hwy 3 (better) or Hwy 5 (worse) has to be traversed to travel between the Trail of the CdA and St. Maries. The Pines Motel in St. Maries is reported to offer a shuttle for guests.

We rode the loop counterclockwise, camped, and did the trip in five days which included a semi-rest day in Harrison where we rode out-and-back to Plummer, swam in Lake Coeur d'Alene, & enjoyed delicious ice cream cones.

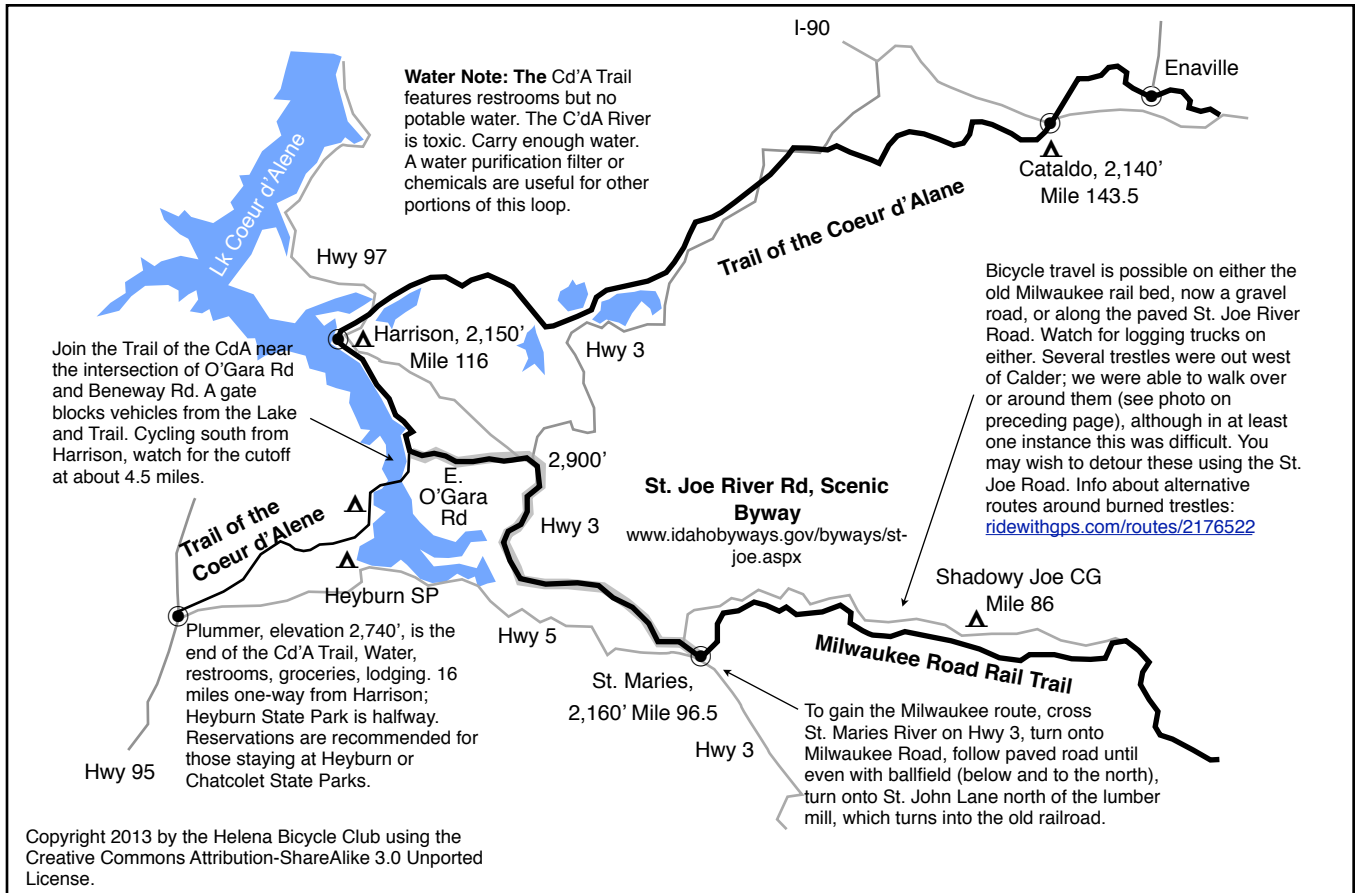
According to Rick Shaffer, cyclist, Prime Minister of Wallace, avid promoter of the Bitterroot 300k, and manager of the Wallace Inn, this route is better ridden in a clockwise direction. Both directions are very workable, but neither avoids crossing the Divide twice on railroad grades (over Lookout Pass and through the Taft Tunnel). I still lean towards riding counterclockwise if camping. Shaffer suggests a credit-card motel-based ride: Wallace to Avery, Avery to St. Maries, St. Maries to Harrison, and Harrison to Wallace. As another option, Ed Renkey of the Friends of the Cd'A suggests beginning from St. Maries, and shuttling to Heyburn State Park.

The Wallace Inn offers parking for those staying at the Wallace Inn, and other public parking is available near the Wallace Visitors Center. The Great Rides map (over) shows the location of a number of campgrounds for those who prefer a tent to a hotel room. In a tent or in a motel, riding clockwise or riding counterclockwise, this is a scenic and fun ride. While not all the route lies on non-motorized paths, about half does, and the other half (except as noted) is on quieter roads and multi-use trails.

¹This route, plus a trip to Plummer from Harrison, totals a 185 mi. or 300 k. loop.

Great Rides! Bitterroot 300k

Contributed by: Mark & Dee Dee Cress, Aldrik Tiktak, Caroline van der Salm, Sue & Bruce Newell



Map: ridewithgps.com/routes/2036318

Length: 167 miles, 300k

Surface: 50/50 paved and gravel surfaces

High Point: 4,750 Lookout Pass

Low Point: 2,150 Harrison, Idaho

Net Elevation gained: About 11,000 feet

Traffic: Variable. None on Trail of CdA, Hiawatha, very light on other trails, light on St. Joe Rd, moderately busy along Hwy 3

Best time: June—September (Call ahead, Taft Tunnel must be open)

Cautions: You must have good lights in Taft Tunnel and others along route. Hwys 3 and 5 have small shoulders and fast traffic.

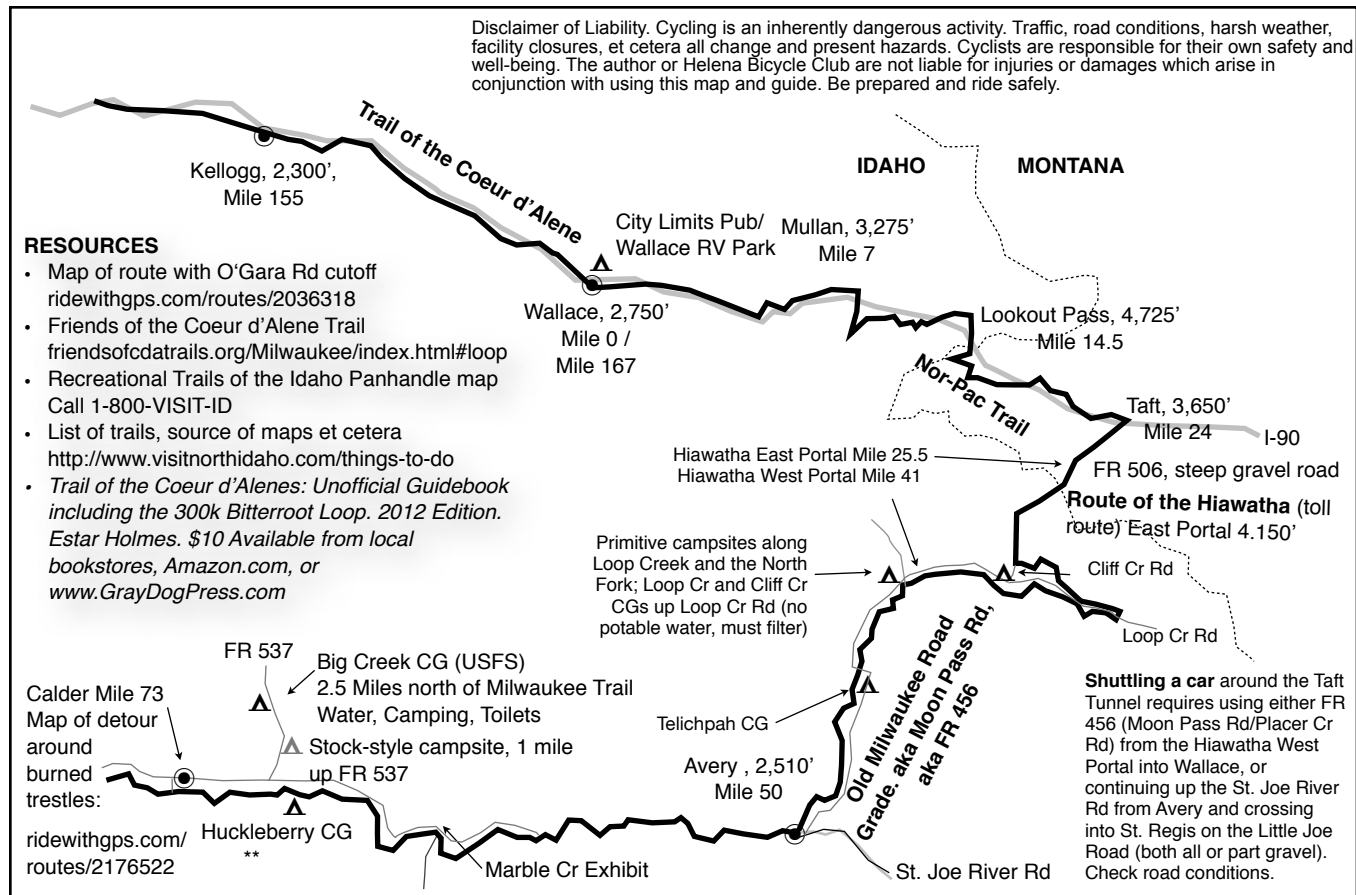
St. Joe Note: The St. Joe River Road (a Scenic Byway) and the Milwaukee Road trail braid back and forth across the St. Joe River. *They are not drawn accurately above*, but can be seen clearly online or in the DeLorme Atlas. We traveled on both the trail and the road. There were a few log trucks on both. Portions of the rail trail may be closed for repairs, use the road if the trail is closed or in rough shape. The campgrounds noted must be accessed from the road.

Bike Advice: A touring or cyclo-cross bike with sturdy but fast rolling 32 mm or larger tires would be perfect. Due to circumstances, we used hard-tailed mountain bikes. About half of the route is paved, the other is a good gravel surface, but this would be a very difficult ride on a stiff road bike with skinny tires.

Cue Sheet Counter-clockwise

	Counter-clockwise	Clockwise	
Wallace	0	166	Water, Restrooms, Camping, Groceries, Laundromats, Restaurants, Motels, Fuel, Library, Post Office, Brew Pub (City Limits Brewing)
Mullan; Accessing the NorPac Trail from the west	7	159	Water, Restrooms, Restaurants, Motels, Fuel, Library, Post Office. From the Mullan Trailhead, follow River St, then Friday Av east about 1.5 miles. Follow Willow Cr Rd aka FR 8008 over Interstate, uphill and south about 3 miles from the Mullan Trailhead, where you'll come across a USFS restroom. Follow the gravel road marked as the NorPac Trail heading <i>uphill</i> toward Lookout Pass. See the <i>Unofficial Guidebook</i> for an alternative approach to the NorPac Trail.
Lookout Pass Ski Area	14.5	151.5	Water, Restrooms, Restaurant
Taft maintenance shed; Accessing the NorPac Trail from the east	24	142	NorPac (Northern Pacific) Trail diverges from the gravel road paralleling Interstate a short distance west of MDOT gravel shed, crossing under the freeway twice before winding up at railroad grade to Lookout Pass to the south of the Interstate.
East Portal, Route of the Hiawatha	25.5	140.5	Robust non-RR grade climb from Taft. Restrooms. \$10 Trail Use Fee (as advertised Feb 2013). 1.7 mile long Taft Tunnel is not lighted; <u>bring a very bright bike light</u> and a good headlamp www.ridethehiawatha.com/

Maps—Navigation is nearly all straightforward, but bring along a good Idaho roadmap. The *DeLorme Idaho Atlas & Gazetteer* is hard to beat, if unwieldy. Study the web links and make copies of details you might wonder about while touring. The *Recreational Trails of the Idaho Panhandle* map, along with the *Unofficial Guidebook* are invaluable resources for planning and navigation.



West Portal, Route of the Hiawatha	41	125	Restrooms. See above regarding Trail Use Fee and required lighting. Primitive camping possibilities on nearby Loop Creek.
Telichpah Campground (formerly called North Fork Campground)	45.5	120.5	NO potable water (must filter), Restrooms, Camping At river level, S. side, below FR 456 Moon Pass Rd aka Old Milwaukee RR Grade. 6 miles north of Avery, Idaho on the N. Fork of the St. Joe Rd (#456), turn south 1 mile on old Moon Pass Road. Can be directly accessed from FR 300A. www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/ipnf/recreation/wateractivities/recarea/?recid=6902&actid=82
Avery	50	116	Water, Restrooms, Limited groceries, Restaurants, Motels, Fuel, Post Office. Consider riding two-track FR 300A, east side of river, Avery to Telichpah CG (USFS) www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/rec/yourplace/cgguide/51.html
Huckleberry Campground (BLM)	68	98	BLM campground on St. Joe River Road, south side of river, approx. Mile Post 29.5, ridewithgps mile 87+
Calder	73	93	Water, Restaurant, Very limited groceries. Camping available.
Shadowy Joe Campground (USFS)	86	80	On St. Joe River Road, north side of river www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/rec/yourplace/cgguide/34.html , camping, restrooms, water
St. Maries	96.5	69.5	Water, Restrooms, Groceries, Laundromats, Restaurants, Motels, Fuel, Library, Post Office, Hospital
O’Gara Road cutoff	111.5	54.5	Cutoff from Trail of the CdA. On N. end of O’Gara Bay. 100 yd gated access road. Study ridewithgps.com/routes/2036318 online map to identify connections and turnoff (it’s easy and obvious, but worth double checking).
Harrison	116	50	Water, Restrooms, Groceries, Bicycle Repair Shop, Restaurants, Motels, Library, Post Office
Cataldo	143.5	22.5	Camping at Kahnderosa CG, Restroom, Restaurant, Limited groceries
Enaville	148.5	17.5	Camping at Albert’s Landing (no potable water Aug 2012), 1 mile north on Old River Rd. Cross river 0.5 miles north of Snake Pit Tavern.
Kellogg	155	11	Water, Restrooms, Groceries, Bicycle Repair Shop, Laundromats, Restaurants, Motels, Fuel, Library, Post Office, Hospital
Wallace	166	0	Wallace Inn offers shuttles to Lookout Pass. N. City Limits brewpub next to Wallace RV Park (208) 753-7121 (great showers) on 9 Mile Cr Rd.