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BETWEEN THE SNOW AND THE SUN JUST PLAIN

Washington State's Cascade Mountains present a fearsome face to the Pacific Ocean, soaring to 14,411 feet at Mount Rainier's peak. East of the range, in the rain shadow of these giants, the Columbia Plateau simmers under the summer sun, with temperatures climbing in excess of 100°F.



Entiat Ridge rewards riders with views of snowy Cascade summits.

But between the snow and the sun is a landscape made for adventure. Lying little more than 100 miles from downtown Seattle, this region of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest hides a vast network of forestry roads and trails suitable for adventure riders of all skill levels and any motorcycle displacement.

The town of Plain, Washington, occupies a sweet spot just 14 miles north of its famous faux-Bavarian cousin, Leavenworth. Plain is just that, plain, with no pretensions to being anything other than the tiny, hospitable hamlet it is. I can't tell you the

population, and neither can the U.S. Census Bureau. It's that small... but it has everything a rider needs: fuel, groceries, a couple restaurants, and even a few lodging options.

And then there's all that riding. The hills surrounding Plain, rising gently 4,000 feet above the town, are crisscrossed with a web of forestry roads tracing valleys and ridge tops. Adventure bikers with even minimal off-road riding experience and some GPS smarts can chart innumerable loop rides, primarily on gravel roads suitable for even the biggest ADV bike.

Chiwawa Loop Road (County Road 22) provides easy paved access to this trail network. On a late June ride, I followed 22 to National Forest Road 6121, beginning a

GOOD RIDING

by Kevin Kroeker



Forestry roads wrap around the lower slopes of Labyrinth Mountain, west of Lake Wenatchee.

clockwise loop of 80 miles. Leaving the Chiwawa River, I pointed my *Husqvarna TE610* up a series of rock-strewn switchbacks to the Entiat Summit Road. The snow-capped heights of the Cascades rose to my right, and far below, Lake Wenatchee glimmered in the sun.

The wide, gravel Entiat Road winds along a ridge top, traversing patches of forest that succumbed to an enormous 180,000-acre fire in 1994. A side trail leads to the Sugarloaf Mountain Fire Lookout, which narrowly escaped that blaze and continues to be staffed each summer, standing watch for a return of wildfire to this tinder-dry terrain.

Purple milk-vetch and lupine bloomed in the springtime warmth at these 5,000-foot elevations as I continued south, then briefly west on NF-5800. From here, it's less than 10 miles to the town of Ardenvoir and pavement. I turned south on Moe Ridge instead, snaking my way through a series of bends and hairpins that eventually reconnected with Entiat Summit Road.

These ridge-top trails were the highlight of the ride, tantalizing me with views of Chumstick Mountain and distant fire roads emerging from far-off basins only to dip again behind intervening crests. My route slipped over the western edge of the ridge and switchbacked down to the valley and its tree-tunnel dirt roads, where my course turned north to parallel the heights I'd just ridden.

At one point my return route approached within a quarter mile of my outbound path, yet I stayed on new ground as I followed NF-7801 and Little Chumstick Creek Road back to State Route 209 and sleepy Plain.

I rolled into town, inhaled an ice-cream cone outside the "Just Plain Grocery," and pondered my options for campsites. Nearby Lake Wenatchee's state park requires reservations months in advance for its idyllic lakeside camping spots. Since my plans had formed only a half hour earlier, I rode to the stunning Glacier View Campground farther west on the lake's south shoreline. It's one of 18 *U.S. Forest Service* campgrounds in the area—but the only one on the shores of Wenatchee.

My tent set up and the resident chipmunks satisfied with the noodles they extracted from my food bag, I watched the sun burn down the horizon to the snow-capped peaks of the Cascades, dreaming of a return adventure between the snow and the sun.

Download detailed *Forest Service* topography maps at www.fs.usda.gov/main/okawen/maps-pubs **ADV**



Kevin Kroeker lives in Vancouver, Canada, where he works as a copywriter and nurtures a secret desire to live in the United States, because that's where they keep all the great desert riding. He shares stories and insights from more than 40,000 miles of off-road adventures at Adventure Ride Guide. You could save yourself a lot of trouble by reading about his mistakes and not repeating them. He loves dogs and is owned by four of them. **AdventureRideGuide.com**



Home for the night at
Glacier View Campground.