

RIDING GOD'S COUNTRY IN NORTHERN VERMONT - ROUTE 100 TO THE CANADIAN BORDER

Robert Laford

Vermont's Route 100 is one of United States' best roads and best known riding routes for motorcyclists to enjoy. Route 100 bisects the state of Vermont from Massachusetts to the Canadian border. It is a well-maintained wonderfully scenic route that offers great views through the heart of the Green Mountains.

Using Killington, just outside of Rutland in central Vermont, as a base camp for riding the state, the ride begins as the sun starts its day's journey over the cloud encircled mountain tops greeting the riders for the day. The late summer's fog fills the valleys on this morning, shrouding the riders in a cool dampness for what will become blue skies and a warm welcoming sun as the day progresses.

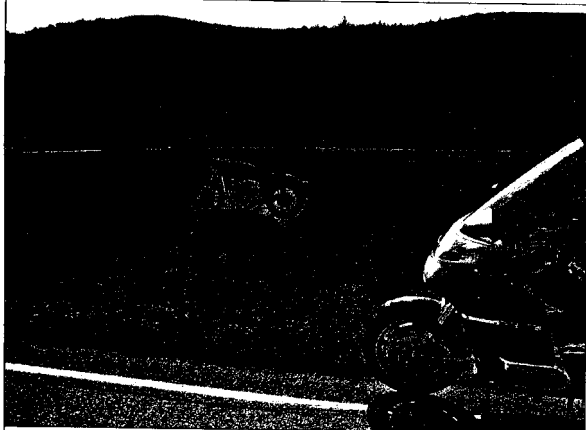
Route 100, and all its off shoots and nearby mountain passes, offer great scenery with glimpses of the mountain ranges. Their towering evergreens acting as sentinels to the farms and villages in each valley passed through along the rider's path. During the early morning hours the sleepy New England villages are not yet awake for the day's activities. The roadsides are alive, however, with the peaceful grazing livestock of the many farms that dot the countryside.

Roadside farm stands are quietly waiting for the day's produce to be harvested and placed on display for the many families and passers by to stop, purchase, and enjoy with tonight's meals. This late season ride shows lines of bright orange pumpkins filling the fields and farm stands in response to the autumn colors soon to peak in the trees of the nearby hardwood forest.

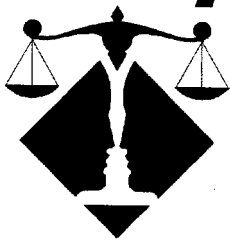
Each town, large or small, along the route gives temptation for the rider to stop and visit the local attractions, shops, and businesses. Waterbury, Vermont, for example,

is home to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream - and no trip to Vermont is complete without a dish or two of the famed treats and a tour of the factory. Started in a converted gas station in nearby Burlington, Ben and Jerry went to work in 1978 to make great ice cream. Their company has become world renowned for not only the great ice cream that they produce but also for their history of being good neighbors and supporting local and not so local causes and concerns.

Riding through Stow the mountain views rise off the rider's west flank, framing the open cornfields and grazing cattle at the valley's roadside. Traffic is light, even through the centers of the towns and villages. Once outside of the settled communities, the road quickly becomes a place of solitude where the rider shares passage with only the occasional bicyclist and even fewer automobiles. Route 100 is a well-known haven for motorcyclists. Evidence of this is



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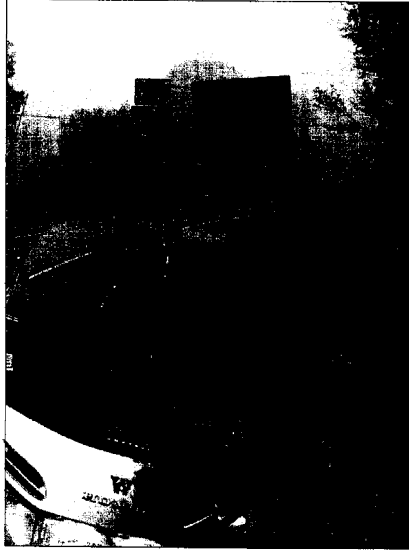
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the number of motorcyclists that pass. Each shares the enjoyment, thoughts, and senses of the road that they are feeling, with a wave or a nod of friendly acknowledgement to each other.

North of Eden Vermont, the terrain begins to moderate from the mountainous route into riding that cruises between the rolling pastures and green meadows. There are picturesque views with content herds of cattle in the fields and horses in the roadside paddocks at the farms that frequent the region. Nature's livestock is in view on the edges of the ride as well, with Canada Geese preparing their day's flight. The rider's sensations stir with the sights, sounds, and smells that are not readily apparent in more urban rides and settings.

Route 100 ends outside of Newport and the ride continues along Route 5 into town and along the shores of Lake Memphremagog. Newport offers a pleasant opportunity for window shopping along its Main Street and urges all towards its many shops for a brief respite from the ride.

The name of the lake comes from the Abenaki Indian word meaning "beautiful waters." It is a peaceful stop and stroll along the town's well-groomed lakeside park and marina with its moored sailboats resting at the water's edge. The lake stretches as a transportation channel used by past generations of Native Americans and early settlers to pass from New England into Canada and beyond. Legend tells of the sea serpent, Memphre. When the white people settled, the Natives told them that they would not bathe or swim in the lake because it was inhabited by a sea serpent. Sightings and tales of Memphre are said to continue even into modern time, but its elusive inhabitant does not hinder the resources and recreational uses of this beautiful waterfront.



Today's route continues a few miles further north and ends at the border between Derby Line, Vermont and Rock Island, Quebec. One interesting stop is at the town's library, where the facility is a shared resource between the two towns and the two countries. A line along the floor through the library delineates the two halves of the building located at the border crossing, it is noticeable that there are two types of livelihoods that crisscross paths at this point on the map. One is of the travelers, truckers, merchants, and business people stopping to declare their intentions and their direction at the border and passing through the small town soon to be on their way. The other lifestyle is the quiet townspeople, tending to their lives, almost oblivious to the border at their doorstep. Their errands today may run on one side of the border, and tomorrow's errands may be on the other side. At this close a spot they are all just neighbors, not countrymen from one side or the other.

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It is time to turn the bike back towards the south. By the time the ride is over it will be nearly 300 miles. The day is more than half over at the border stop and the sun will be looking at its last glimpses of today's mountains when the bike is parked back at Killington Mountain.

Vermont is made for riders, and the far-reaching northern boundaries of the Green Mountain State are a natural beauty for all. The many miles of roads, their beauty with the farms and fields, mountains, and people are all perfect reasons that beckon to the rider to come back and ride this fantastic Route 100 through the villages and valleys over and over again. And that is just one of the many roads that are awaiting this rider's return in Vermont.

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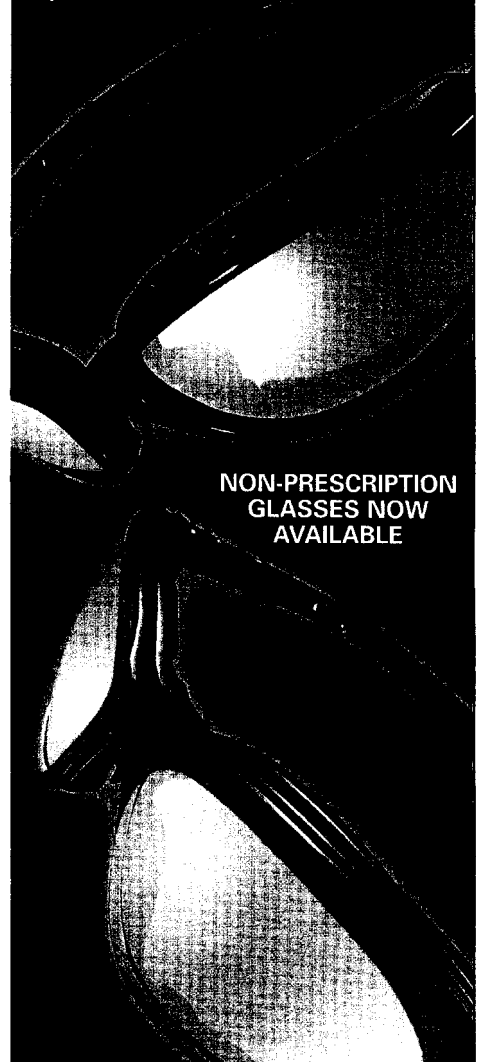
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