

Eat the ice cream first - Before your name is in stone!

Ben & Jerry's

and Rock of Ages

By Robert Laford • GWRRA #126196 • Petersham, Massachusetts

If you are reading a copy of *Wing World*, there is no doubt that you get enjoyment from riding your motorcycle. And as a Member of GWRRA, much of that enjoyment comes from the friends you ride with and the friends you have yet to meet on the road. As we get older we also come to realize that in time we begin to lose some of those friends and family members to time—and one day that time will also be ours. One of today's stops will be at the Rock of Ages quarry in Barre, Vermont, where the final memorial of each of our names may have its beginning—so take the advice of the adage that could be the Gold Winger's mantra, "Life is short, eat dessert first."

Central Vermont is one of the greatest riding areas in the Northeast, and this day's jumping off point begins at the base of Okemo Mountain in Ludlow, Vermont. The town's center is at the intersection of Routes 103 and 100 and we will take advantage of that love of life that we all enjoy as riders and great miles of Vermont before the day is over. Vermont offers the rider picturesque views along the sleepy rivers, rolling hills along the many meadows, pastures, and beautiful farm land, and it also offers the challenges of mountain roads with switchbacks and quick climbs and descents. All these are within a few minute's ride from each other and will become a golden collection of memories to the two-wheeled visitor.

It is late summer, and the autumn colors are just starting to show their hues. The roads traveled today by motorcycle will soon be filled with the outdoor enthusiasts heading into the Green Mountains to enjoy the winter sports that the nearby hills and villages offer in the ski slopes and sled trails that call Vermont home. We follow Route 100 north past several glacial lakes carved into the mountain-scape as the road twists and bends around the inlets that make up the shore line of the water front leading us towards Killington Mountain and beyond. The hospitable roads of Vermont are welcoming to motorcyclists and offer the rider well maintained curves and scenic byways at every junction and corner, giving the motorcyclist a feeling of exhilaration, adventure, and



They're both green... a stop by the National Guard Armory in Ludlow, Vermont at the start of our ride.

freedom as the rider leans and banks his or her ride upward and throughout the beckoning mountains. This part of the northeast gives the rider the best there is about being on a motorcycle.

Route 100, and all its off-shoots and nearby mountain passes, offers 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.

A stop for breakfast is warranted. We stop in nearby Pittsfield at the Swiss Farm Inn (www.swissfarminn.com), a cozy and welcoming Bed and Breakfast where there is truth in advertising as their roadside sign says, "World's Best Breakfast." With our bellies full and Killington Mountain smiling over our shoulder we head off to find more great Green Mountain roads.

We head further north on to Route 107, through Bethel and into Royalton where we pick up Route 110. The Green Mountain State is synonymous with red-roofed barns, farms, rolling hills, maple syrup, and covered bridges. As each road bends and winds its way through the lush greenery of Vermont, it is apparent that the routes may pose a challenge to truck traffic moving freight as they crawl, climb, bend and curve through the hills and valleys.

Each time we crest a hill and dip into the valley below the sights of the approaching vil-

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lage, with the church steeples reaching to the sky, welcome us to the perfect New England setting. Roadside farm stands are quietly waiting for the day's produce to be harvested and placed on display for the many families and passersby 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.

Riding through the farmland it reminds us of the snippet that, with the woods to one side of the road and the cornfield to the other, this motorcyclist is riding through the deer's hallway that connects his or her bedroom to their kitchen. Just a reminder that other vehicles and drivers are not the only concern to be on the

look out for, but in the beauty that nature is we must share the road with others beyond ourselves as well!

Coming into East Barre we are on the look out for signs that direct us to the Rock of Ages Quarry and Visitors Center (www.rockofages.com). We turn onto Websterville Road off of Route 110 to find the visitors center a few miles away. The visit at the facility includes a tour of the quarry and the factory where you can watch the granite artisans work. There is also a granite bowling alley on the property where you can set your own pins and roll a ball towards the pins on a granite lane. The working quarry is the world's largest deep-hole, dimension granite quarry at nearly 600 feet deep. The tour brings you to the edge where you can peer into its depths and observe the quarriers as they cut blocks from the sheer face.

To truly appreciate the skill of the artists that work with the granite, the rider can follow Route 14 past the Visitors Center to the Hope Cemetery about a mile north of Barre. This

cemetery is not only a traditional resting place of generations past, it is also a showcase of Barre's granite and sculptural heritage. There are many individualized and unusual monuments, including sculptured images of those at rest, toys, airplanes, angels, and other monuments of amazing beauty.

Continuing on Route 14 out of Barre, we pick up Route 2 east, and then Route 215 in

Marshfield to find our next stop at the Cabot Creamery (www.cabotcheese.com). A tour of the Cabot Creamery and a visit to their visitors center offers an inside look at cheese making and details about Vermont's agriculture. Formed in 1919 the Cabot Creamery Cooperative is made up of farmer-owners who provide the fresh milk for the products made in the Vermont plant and shipped around the country for us all to enjoy. Many of the dairy herds we have been sharing the landscape with today are on the payroll for the Cabot plant and are hard at work to give us these fresh dairy products.



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Today's route continues further along Route 215 to 15 west with a destination back to Route 100. The rider's senses are not only piqued by a twist of the wrist in the sweeping corners, but nature's presence also helps in leading the rider on the perfect ride. Throughout the winding route, visions, like the meadows filled with wild flowers, or the Great Blue Heron taking flight from a marsh as we pass, all offer peaceful scenic beauty for the rider to enjoy. 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.

Back on Route 100 south, we make our way towards Stow where the mountain views rise off the rider's west flank, framing the open cornfields and grazing cattle at the valley's roadside. Route 100 is a well-known haven for motorcyclists. Evidence of this is 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.

Each town, large or small, along the route gives temptation for the rider to stop and visit the local attractions, shops, and businesses. We are looking forward to one of those stops in Waterbury, home to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream—and no trip to Vermont is complete without a



The author was informed after the Ben & Jerry's tour that one of the flavors must have been made just for him.

dish or two of the famed treats and a tour of the factory (www.benjerry.com). 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.

With our earlier stop being at a place where memorials begin, we may have thought a bit of our own mortality. But the roads, the views, our friends, and our final stop to share a treat while on the road reminds us that there is much to do, and many means to enjoy this life that we are given—so have another bowl of ice cream and enjoy this ride that we are on.

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