

ROAD TRIP

"FALLING" FOR SCRAMBLED EGGS AND APPLE PIE

words and images: Robert Laford

October and autumn stirs memories of fresh apples, colorful fall foliage, and Smokey Bear. So why not draw them all together to make a great fall ride on two wheels? Two annual events habitually appear on the ride calendar each year for motorcyclists throughout central New England. Both rides give reasons - if an excuse to ride is needed - to get out on two wheels and enjoy the early autumn colors and temperatures of southern New Hampshire and Vermont.

Like many destinations taken by motorcyclists, each of these rallying points revolve around good food, good friends, and great scenic roads. The first point of interest is the annual Fire Prevention Week Breakfast hosted by the Jaffrey, New Hampshire firefighters. The second stop is the Apple Pie Festival in Dummerston, Vermont on Columbus Day weekend.

Since Fire Prevention Week falls on the week containing October 9 each year, to coincide with the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire, the two ride-and-eat events some times fall on the first two consecutive Sundays in October with Columbus Day weekend being at the tail end of Fire Prevention Week. Other years, however, both Sunday events come together and become a great day for bright colors, wonderfully twisty roads, and destinations to temp our palates!

October is also prime apple picking time so today's rallying point is at the Johnny Appleseed Visitor's Center on Route 2 in Leominster, Massachusetts. Here stands a statue of the fabled



Johnny Appleseed - honored in his hometown and home state of Massachusetts as the official "folk hero" of the Commonwealth. Every bite of apple taken during the day's ride can be testament of Johnny's efforts in the early days of the United States.

The journey for breakfast and apple pie begins about two hundred years ago. Born John Chapman in 1774 to a father who was a Patriot who fought the British Red Coats in Concord, the legend of "Johnny Appleseed" is one of a barefoot wanderer

scattering apple seeds across the continent. John Chapman was actually a practical nurseryman. He realized that there was a real need and an opportunity for service in supplying seeds and seedlings to the growing new nation.

Moving ahead of the pioneers around 1800, Johnny started many nurseries throughout the Midwest by planting seeds. Apples were a practical necessity in the early settlers' diets, and assisted with the stability of the newly established homesteads. He created apple orchards in the wildernesses of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana, spanning an estimated area of 100,000 square miles. Some of these trees are still bearing fruit after 150 years.

So to pay tribute to the enduring legacy of Johnny Appleseed it is time to wander through the hills and valleys of southern New Hampshire and Vermont in search of the best apple pie! A quick ride from Massachusetts Route 2 to Route 31 finds the rider already moving away from the urban landscape and through the farms and hills nearby. Shortly after crossing into New Hampshire, the riders' route heads west on Route 124 towards Jaffrey and the first stop.

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FALLING FOR APPLE PIE

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Jaffrey, New Hampshire is nestled at the base of the famous Grand Monadnock Mountain. With its miles of forested lands, sparkling lakes, and rolling countryside, the serenity of the picturesque village green offers those passing through a magical beauty and tranquillity only available in small town America.

The breakfast buffet presented to the community by the firefighters is unmatched even by the best restaurants. Fire Chief David Chamberlain boasts that when the firefighters originally started their annual breakfasts one of their members was a professional chef. "He trained us right," Chief Chamberlain stresses. The firefighter-chefs offer a wide selection of breakfast treats including home-made pastries, eggs, French toast, pancakes, home fries, sausages, toast, baked beans, and a selection of juices and coffee. Even if the early morning ride is in the cool autumn temperatures, the feast available will have the rider warmed up and ready for more miles in no time!

The stop with the Jaffrey Firefighters also shows evidence of more of the firefighters' passions beyond cooking. While watching the faces of young visitors to the station as they



see Smokey Bear, climb on the fire apparatus, and visit with the department personnel, the service and professionalism that every fire department offers to their community is apparent.

After passing through the fire department's breakfast buffet - at least once - it is off to enjoy more colors, corners, and comrades. Southern New Hampshire and Vermont offer a special character and unhurried quality for the rider.

Continuing along Route 124 the ride winds along the foothills that surround nearby Mt. Monadnock. A National Natural Landmark, the peaceful presence of Mount Monadnock quietly looms over the towns and valleys below. The unsurpassed 100-mile views of points in all six New England states are the reward for a climb to the bare rock summit, which may be why the mountain is said to be the second most frequently climbed mountain in the world.

The route leads to Keene, New Hampshire where the rider heads west on Route 9 towards Brattleboro, Vermont. The destination for dessert is Dummerston, Vermont. Dummerston rests atop a mountain nestled between Vermont Route 30 and U.S. Route 5 just north of Brattleboro. The short trek up the mountain is very enjoyable with many twisties and switchbacks as you climb the elevation. Reaching the small town center the rider is greeted by the quintessential New England town with its church, common, and town hall. This small town is different than others however, as it is filled with motorcycles, visitors, and apple pies that each outnumber the local population!

The reason for the destination is the annual Apple Pie Festival. The residents of this small Vermont town come together each fall filling their kitchens and their town with home made apple pie - 1,500 apple pies to be exact!

All the necessary food groups are covered to satiate the rider's taste buds. There's apple pie, apple pie with (Vermont cheddar) cheese, and apple pie ala mode. Then there is hot and cold sweet apple cider, home made cider donuts, home made plain and sugar donuts, and fresh picked apples as well. If more sustenance is needed, there is always the cook tent with burgers, hot dogs, chili, and baked beans.

To round out this country fair atmosphere, the local grange sponsors a craft fair and a pancake breakfast is hosted by the local Volunteer Fire Department. This event has become a "must stop" on the fall ride schedule of many motorcyclists. The nearby town hall parking lot is tagged "motorcycles only" and it and the nearby field are filled with upwards of 1,000 visiting motorcycle riders. Each rider looking to satisfy their senses with the sights, sounds, and tastes of Vermont in its entire spectacular fall beauty.

After the rider has had his or her fill - of apple pie, people watching, bike watching, and fall festival fun - its time to pick a new direction. The afternoon autumn sun is welcoming and warm and there are many more miles full of brilliant fall colors waiting in every direction. It's time to ride again.

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