



Barb Harris

She's Wild About Rides To Wildcat Mountain

By Tammy Ditter
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MY LOVE AFFAIR with motorcycles didn't get rolling until later in life. When I was in my teens and 20s, I dated guys with bikes and always enjoyed riding with them.

Over the years, the motorcycle races I attended at Road America convinced me I'd never be satisfied just riding in the passenger seat. So, at age 36, I took the motorcycle rider safety course at the local tech college and got my license.

My learning curves were practiced on a Honda 100cc dirt bike in the summer of 2006, and the following spring, after researching many motorcycles, I purchased a Hyosung GT250R, a V-twin sport bike.

I rode the wheels off that little 250 and learned the importance of safety gear like a helmet and clothing made of leather or Kevlar.

The next year, I was ready to move up to bigger bikes with more horsepower and an extra gear for passing. These days I'm riding a Hyosung GT650R.

Backroads Scenery Is Best

Some biker friends showed me a few good roads to ride and I found some on my own. I now put on about 6,000 miles discovering adventure each year.

One of my favorite rides is from my hometown of Fond du Lac to Winona, Minnesota. I take this trip several times a year because it's so scenic.

Between Fond du Lac and La Crosse

there are many small routes that provide great scenery. I prefer the backroads with less traffic and more interesting landscapes than what's seen along most interstates.

● One of those routes I take is Highway 33 west through Baraboo, Hillsboro and Wildcat Mountain State Park just south of Ontario. And I'm happy to recommend it!

Wildcat Mountain is in Vernon County's Kickapoo River Valley. This is the Driftless

“The Driftless Region's meandering landscape is favored among bikers...”

Region of Wisconsin, where the glaciers stopped. Its meandering landscape makes it a favorite among bikers.

The state park is beautiful to visit. There is another picturesque route to Ontario—one that I've found to be almost equally windy—which includes County F south to Highway 131 north.

Time to Refuel

From Ontario, take Highway 33 west to Cashton. A good time to arrive is right around noon. I've found the best places to stop for lunch, especially on the backroads, are the locally owned restaurants. In Cashton, I often visit Badger Crossing Pub & Eatery. I recommend the bacon cheeseburger with homemade seasoned fries.

WORN TO RIDE. Tammy Ditter keeps safety in mind with Kevlar outerwear as she prepares for a ride to Wildcat Mountain, shown above.

Out of Cashton, take Highway 27 north to Sparta, then Highway 16 west into West Salem and past Neshonoc Lake. Next, head north on Highway 108, then north on Highway C through Mindoro Cut. Part of the road is carved through the middle of a bluff just before the turnoff for Mindoro. The road has rock formations jutting upwards on both sides.

From Mindoro, take County T west to Highway 53, which eventually combines with Highway 35 (also known as the Great River Road) along the Mississippi.

There are many ways to head back east, but if you choose to make time with a return on Highway 33, head back through Wildcat Mountain and take County FF north and east into Hillsboro. A great place for dinner or lunch is Barbie's Kitchen, where I often get their excellent grilled ham and cheese, topped off with a slice of home-baked pecan pie.

From riding on the back of a boy's bike, to finding the satisfaction in taking the handlebars myself, I've enjoyed many weekend rides in the beautiful state of Wisconsin—and know I always will. 🍗

Your Favorite Ride? Share the route you love in a future issue. E-mail to: editors@OurWisconsinMag.com and put “Favorite Ride” in the subject line. To submit by postal mail, see page 5.

Sideline: Onalaska is the trailhead of the Great River State Trail...bringing your bicycle for 100 miles of nonstop biking!