



The Tripper Report for September - December 2007 (updated 6/12/2013)

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Wisconsin 2007 September 9th to September 16th

Ride Director: James Abel, Report by: Susie Kirschner



Door County in northern Wisconsin is often referred to as the Cape Cod of the Midwest, and appropriately so. Cozy, quaint, peaceful, water vistas, cornfields, tiny church steeples and ferries all come to mind. This ride was rated 1B and seemed right on the mark with rolling hills and flat county roads and mileage which varied from 40 miles to 60 miles a day. The trip started in De Pere, a suburb of Green Bay and we traveled a loop up to Sturgeon Bay, Sister Bay, and back down to Sturgeon Bay and De Pere. During the seven days we were able to visit Egg Harbor, Fish Creek, Washington Island, Peninsula Park and Potawatomi Park. We traveled back and forth across the peninsula from

the Green Bay side to the Lake Michigan side. No tales of anyone getting lost as the maps and cue sheets were detailed and excellent. The traffic was very light and the routes kept us off the main highways and out in the rural setting and safely into towns.

Our accommodations were very pleasant, staying at the historic James Street Inn in De Pere, the Stone Harbor Resort in Sturgeon Bay and the Birchwood Lodge in Sister Bay. The first and last dinners were provided and the rest of the time we ventured to local restaurants. Jim Abel, the group leader provided excellent suggestions for each town.

At times we stayed two and three nights in one place. This allowed for choices of rides on several days. In spite of unseasonable cold and windy days, the spirit was great and the social hours and dinners out were noisy and fun. There were three couples riding tandem and the trip accommodated this well.

The ride director was organized, tactful and calm which contributed to a relaxed enjoyable experience for all. There were several couples new to BAC and all hope they will return for another ride. On this Door County ride the scenery was lovely, the cycling relaxed and enjoyable and expectations seemed to be met for all.

Participants: Julie Clark, James Abel, Jo-ann Nicola, John S Freitag, Wendy Ayotte, Roger Ayotte, Daniel Smerchak, Jim Joyner, Carol Deland, Sheila Coe, Dean Coe, Susie Kirschner, Bill Kirschner, Michael Weisel, Patricia Weisel, Becky Hawkins, Jo Todd, Phyllis McCarthy, Dick Otto, Jim Morano, Cathy Morano, Dan Peterson, Joan Peterson, Kathy Emmons

The New York Finger Lakes in the Fall September 23rd to October 2nd

Ride Director: Graham Fleming, Report by: Richard Jung



"Uncork New York" reads the sign near the Inn at Glenora Wine Cellars--one of six spectacular hotels featured on this nine-day cycling adventure through the New York Finger Lakes Region.

Past BAC Board Chairman, Graham Fleming and his wife Lois took three years of cycling, cyber, and scenic recognizance to design this gem of tour. Graham and Lois also established superb relations with the innkeepers and merchants along the route during their several route-preparation visits to ensure special dinners, presentations, and attention for our touring group of twenty-one riders.

With flexible routes (officially rated 2B but with options for the more sedate as well as the most serious riders) daily mileages

ranged from easy 30 milers with gentle rollers to more challenging 60 mile days with lots of hills. Somehow though these steep inclines were often miraculously "leveled" psychologically by stunning vistas of the five Finger Lakes transgressed during the tour, full fall foliage by the end of the trip, and the promise of local wines sometimes complemented by home-baked grape pies of various sorts available during happy hour in our tour leaders' room each evening.

The trip's alpha and omega accommodation was the Inn on the Lake on the westernmost "finger", Canandaigua Lake. Bagpipe music from a water-front wedding greeted us as we assembled our bikes on our rooms' patios. Our tour leaders had organized a special first-night menu as well for our group at the hotel's Max on the Lake with the choice of Tournedos "Au Poivre" (twin petite filets with the fix'ns) fresh Atlantic salmon, or Rigatoni Jennifer (rigatoni pasta tossed with spicy Italian sausage).

Seven of the nine nights on tour our hotels faced one of the Finger Lakes, including: in addition to two nights at Canandaigua's Inn on the Lake, one night at the spacious Ramada Geneva Lakefront overlooking the northern tip of Seneca Lake; two nights in the historic (built in 1807) Sherwood Inn in pristine Skaneateles; and two nights at the Inn at Glenora with breathtaking morning views of fog rolling over Seneca Lake and its bountiful vineyards

Graham's routing was simply impeccable. Rolling vineyards, colorful pumpkin fields, and nostalgic Amish school houses were but a few of the frequent intoxicating sites on route. Two-day layovers interspersed after every two days of cycling added to the salubrious cycling experience of this tour.

Two of the many show-stopping attractions on route stand out for me. First, a stop at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. and Fish Wildlife Service close to Seneca Falls (where the Women's Rights Movement reputedly started in 1848) offered up my most "Zen" experience-when witnessing a regal bald eagle protecting its nest as well as hundreds of species of waterfowl and other migratory birds nesting, resting and feeding in 7,000 acres of various natural, protected habitats.

Then, the Simply Red Lakeside Bistro on Day 6 of the tour provided our group its favorite lunch at Sheldrake Point Winery. In addition to the lunch of a lifetime, I had shipped home a fantastic case of the winery's award-winning dry Riesling....to extend the trip's ecstasy.

Clip in early for this adventure. This tour fills quickly....for it truly does uncork so many of this area's delights.

Participants: Lois Fleming, Graham Fleming, Gail Preston, Bud Preston, Beverlee French, Rosemary Carrico, Charles Northrop, James Abel, Jo-ann Nicola, Doris Falls-Grablewski, Perry Pollock, Jackie Mastrangelo, Barbara Underwood, David Patria, Lewis Blatt, Nita Blatt, Richard Jung, Dick Bellman, Glenn Guenterberg, Patrice Van Vleet, Mary Myers

VT/NH Fall Foliage 2 wk Tour September 23rd to October 6th
Ride Director: Julie Leever, Report by: John Steinberg



Imagine cycling along deserted country roads, wind-blown leaves fluttering onto your helmet and scattering across your path. Imagine crossing a stream on a covered bridge; approaching a village with a sign announcing, "Founded in 1763; or passing a cemetery with gravestones from the Civil War. Imagine hillsides painted in green and gold and crimson. Imagine a country general store where you can stop for homemade split pea soup, and fresh baked brownies. Imagine real maple syrup, maple-walnut ice cream and maple cookies. This is New England in the fall.

To prepare for this tour, you should be able to ride a metric century (100 kilometers or 62 miles), gaining 2,500 feet of elevation, and be able to get up and do it again the next day. There are no mountains to climb on this tour, but there are rolling hills, and a few steep

ones. So before you sign up, go find a hill and climb it. There are shorter options on most days. Or, if you are used to more climbing, there are also longer options, adding more miles and more hills, and by the end of the day you won't be disappointed.

The tour takes you through remote areas of Vermont and New Hampshire. On some days, towns are few and far between. Bring your favorite energy bars and electrolyte drinks for these stretches. But there will always be a country general store to stop for food or a deli sandwich. You won't find any Starbucks here, but the Vermont coffee is great. If it is serenity you seek, there may not be a more peaceful place to ride.

Unavoidably, the tour also takes you through larger communities, along busier streets and highways. You should be comfortable riding in traffic, on the shoulder of a highway for short distances, and in the rain.

Accommodations ranged from very comfortable motor inns to elegant bed and breakfasts serving gourmet breakfasts and dinners. Rooms were spacious. Some lodgings had pools and hot tubs—bring your swim suit. Most stops offered choices of dining in both price and quality. The food was always satisfying, and often very good. On rest days, we stayed at locations offering a number of outstanding dining choices, including fresh organic meats and produce.

The ride leaders, Julie and Tom Leever, were locals with extensive knowledge of the area, including the "must-stop locations on the tour. They made an outstanding team. Tom's cue-sheets and maps were accurate and easy to follow. Julie scouted out the dining options, cultural and historical sights along the way. They were interesting, funny and informative—the kind of people you wish you could ride with all the time.

If you have never been to New England in the fall, this tour is an experience of a lifetime.

Participants: Rod Harmon, John Steinberg, Caroline Pease, Richard Poore, Gerald Hefele, Tom Leever, Julie Leever, Don Eden, Alexis Armao, Jon Armao, Craig Deidrick, Jane Holahan, Carole Nacon, Jill Linsk, Ernest Manewal, Gail Eden

The New York Finger Lakes in the Fall - section 2 September 26th to October 5th

Ride Director: Roy Glickman, Report by: Bill Corsbie

We had a very good ride indeed. The Finger Lakes area is hilly and rural. Lots of apple trees and vineyards. The hotels were posh. Each rider had a big detailed map of the area, and a separate route sheet for each day.

In Seneca Falls, we could visit a US National Park dedicated to the women's suffrage movement. There was a convention there in 1848 that marked the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in the USA. Three hundred persons attended, but only 68 signed the document drafted there calling for women's suffrage. The park exhibits showed the development of this concept and its enactment into law.

In Auburn, we visited the home of William Seward, who was the Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln. The home was also a stop for slaves escaping from the south to freedom in Canada. There were many such homes in the area.

The lakes themselves were beautiful. Big natural bodies of water. The Iroquois Indians inhabited the area. Some of the local museums we visited had exhibits about these Indians. At the Oliver house in Pen Yan there was such an exhibit. Another exhibit there focused on Jemima Wilkinson, a charismatic religious leader who lived from 1715 to 1819. She almost died from a fever when she was twenty, spending some time in a coma. When she revived, she abandoned her original name and preached as Public Friend Universal.

Participants: Helene Terris, Don Volta, Spencer Ridings, Jane Volta, Judy Glickman, Robert Dickinson, Roy Glickman, Martha Raak, Rickey Davis, Pat Highet, Ira Terris, Guy Carrier, Ellen Carrier, Charles Abbott, Laurie Abbott, Michael Kirk, Nancy Kirk, Paul Silverstein, Bill Corsbie, Roland Lee

Central California Coast and Wine Country Tour September 30th to October 13th

Ride Director: David Burkhardt, Report by: Ida Nystrom



A one word Tripper Report would say it all for this ride - fabulous. Ride Leader Dave Burkhardt spent three years in the planning process and it shows. His careful attention to detail was apparent on every day of the ride.

The ride began in Santa Cruz, easily accessible from San Jose or San Francisco airports. The first day of riding took us high into the redwoods and canyons, and to our first wine tasting, before returning us along the beach to our hotel. On the next day we headed south through agricultural areas to Monterey and the famous 17 mile drive. Our route south took us along the coast past Point Lobos State Reserve and through Big Sur. After spending two nights in Morro Bay the route turned inland to explore the Santa Barbara wine country (more tastings). A visit to Solvang (the quaint California-Danish

village) let us ride where the pros train. We reluctantly said our good-byes in Santa Barbara after a wonderful two weeks on the road.

The routes were expertly planned to include a wide variety of scenery, all equally enjoyable. Wildlife watchers were especially thrilled by the piles of writhing elephant seals lying within easy viewing distance on the beach. The cue sheets were accurate and detailed; in addition to the usual directions and mileage they included suggestions for the best lunch stops and notes on the tourist attractions along the route. On our last full riding day the suggested lunch spot was an old Wells Fargo stage stop in a lonely canyon, now bypassed by the new highway.

The suggested routes varied in distance and difficulty. Some days were more difficult than others, but the 2B rating was generally appropriate. Whenever possible, Dave provided several different riding options. Five of our eight hotels were two night stays, allowing many options (including not riding at all) on the days we did not have to move. The shortest suggested ride was 28 miles, the longest 64. However, we were given longer and shorter options on both of these days.

Traffic was seldom a problem. Coastal Route 1 was fairly busy, but the wide shoulders provided us an adequate buffer. Although in some cases it was necessary to ride through congested areas to reach our hotels, the routes were planned to minimize the problem as much as possible. Most of the planned routes were along quiet country roads.

The hotels were all first class on this ride, but each had its own character, ranging from the ultra-luxury of the Monterey Plaza to the rustic cabins at Big Sur State Park. Many of the hotels had ocean views. About half the evening meals were group dinners, included in our tour price. On the other nights Dave made restaurant reservations for the group, but if you were in the mood for a quiet meal you were free to go anywhere you wished. Fish lovers were in their element, but meat and vegetarian options were also always available. No one went hungry on this ride!

If, like me, you've never done a ride in California, this one was the perfect introduction. On the other hand, who could ever get enough of such spectacular scenery? The native Californians in the group were equally pleased. In one word, fabulous!

Participants: Janine Jordan, David Burkhardt, Gerald Lum, Clarice Sackett, Scott McKay, Cathy Cloutier, Les Garber, Sharon Hayes, John Hayes, Chuck Jackson, Ida Nystrom, Jim Nystrom, Gat Lum, Jay Marowitz, Ellen Cohen, Ron Cohen

PA's Brandywine Valley, Valley Forge & Amish Country October 13th to October 20th

Ride Director: Joan Strachota, Report by: Susie Stogsdill



This ride had the three main ingredients for a glorious vacation: sunny days, delicious food, and camaraderie.

Joan Strachota, our leader, did an outstanding job with mapping, places to tour, and accommodations. Everyday the map handouts gave the rider two to three different routes with a choice of desired mileage and locations to visit. The routes took the rider through autumn colored, tree lined lanes to museums, villages, battlefields, and lovely gardens.

A day in Pennsylvania started out with a country breakfast giving the rider an opportunity to pair up with a new buddy for the day's adventure. One day you could meet a biking club out riding their penny-farthing, or you might try keeping up with an Amish buggy going about 10 miles per hour. The day ended in Joan's friend home, Suzanne,

for a happy hour and a group dinner at one of the many fabulous eating establishments.

Pennsylvania in late October is not just a riot of colors but this trip was very relaxing, making this a wonderful vacation. Thank you Joan!

Participants: Kathy Patrick-Baas, Leo Riegel, Nancy Wedeen, Teresa Shaffer, Susie Stogsdill, Roy Glickman, Barb Larsen, Richard Wedeen, Stogs Stogsdill, Robert Barday, Sharon Tummins, Joan Strachota, Mary Ellen Shaughnessy, Judy Glickman, Susan Rexer, Sandra Zinn, Larry Zinn, Gail Roberts, Forrest Roberts, E Peter DE LAURA, Judith Barday, David Forester, Don Gieringer, Hal Baas, Kitty Barnes, Abby Linzie, Walter Smith

Ride Leader Seminar - Asheville October 26th to October 30th

Ride Director: Rita Jensen, Report by: Ida Nystrom

Is there an area you know well and love to ride? Or-- perhaps there's a region you've been wanting to explore, but you haven't seen any trips posted there. Maybe you'd like to plan a ride, but don't quite know how to go about it. The BAC Ride Leader's Seminar was designed to address these concerns, and to have some fun while doing it.

The seminar participants who met recently in Asheville varied in expertise from seasoned tour leaders to those who have a ride in the planning stages, and even some who are just "thinking about thinking about..." leading a ride. The two morning seminar sessions addressed all aspects of ride planning. Experienced leaders led discussions of logistics, communications, accounting and managing the ride on the website. The most important lesson of the seminar, however, was that there is no patent formula to follow. Each ride is different and should reflect the particular style of its Ride Director.

BAC members are no exception to the "all work and no play ..." rule, so plenty of time (two afternoons plus two full days) was built into the schedule for riding. Included in the participant's packets were excellent cue sheets detailing a dozen local routes of varying distances and difficulties. Seminar participants were given the option to do whatever they chose, including not riding. This being the BAC, however, most headed out on the roads, either independently or in groups. From the challenging climbs of the Blue Ridge Parkway to the gentler terrain of the Jack's Creek route, all the routes were spectacularly beautiful.

In the BAC we are all volunteers, ride leaders being no exception. The success of our club depends upon the efforts of its members. This seminar made it easier for more of us to step up to the plate and offer our services. We came away with the knowledge we needed to plan tours and know we'll have fun doing it. Future seminars will be held at different locations in conjunction with BAC board meetings. We should all think about attending.

Participants: Kathy Emmons, John S Freitag, Gene Enders, Peg Enders, Archer Yates, Rita Jensen, Lewis Blatt, Nita Blatt, Ralph Draves, Ida Nystrom, Bob Mueller, Ellen Mueller, John McManus, Roy Glickman, Judy Glickman, Tom Leever, Julie Leever, Richard Gallo, Mary Gallo, Karen Hass, Ed Hass, Spencer Ridings, Sharon Jones, James Abel, Wilson Cooper

Yorkshire Dales and Scottish Borders MTB/Road Tour 2007 September 1st to September 15th

Ride Coordinator: Archer Yates, Report by: Sara Blakeslee



This bike tour was lead by Archer and Hilda Yates and supported by Wild Cat Adventures.

The good, the bad and the miraculous of this unique ride included 2 weeks of cycling in Northern England and Scotland with No Rain! I carried the full regalia of weather gear...rain coat, rain pants, long fingered gloves, helmet cover, polypro undies, neoprene booties...each and every day with nary a drop of rain for my efforts. Now wind, that's a different story. We'll get to the 'hurricanes' on the moors later.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park is a land of dramatic limestone scenery dotted with quaint villages in a hill & dale landscape that is crisscrossed with hiking paths. This is a paradise for hikers, and an acid test for cyclists. Some of our group initially experienced shock & awe when confronting

the 1:5 road signs at the bottom of a grade disappearing up into the clouds or at the top of a descent dropping into an abyss off the moorlands. (1:5 is the Scottish math for a 20% ascent or descent.) No matter the steepness and chain ring ratios, we all climbed/walked and braked/walked our way up/down the moors/dales culminating in our 3rd riding day. The 3rd riding day, initially classified as an easy day, was upgraded to challenging after the group repeatedly climbed 14-20% grades over 37 miles with over 4000 feet of climbing without any actual change in our elevation. This is also where the romance and glamour of the windy moors became a reality check. Now that's an adventure! At the end of this day, the newest member of our club, Patty Haislmaier suggested that BAC stood forBig Ass Climb.

Despite our physical exhaustion, a festive atmosphere reigned during social hours. The pubs provided plenty of local ales to quaff and wines to sip as well as gin & tonics to quench our thirst. After each day's run, our fun and lively group was happy to be off the bikes and drinking in the pub. There was lots of partying with 3 Birthdays celebrated enroute.

Leaving behind the sweeping vistas across the moorlands full of purple blooming heather dotted with cotton ball sheep, we moved into the Scottish Borderlands. As we moved northeasterly, the terrain gradually become more accommodating to us cyclists. It seemed each day's ride was abit easier than the last as we pedaled along sweet country roads bounded by ancient stone fences. Our accommodations were in traditional inns and/or private B&B's with the group often split up between accommodations in the delightfully small villages. There was a castle or abbey to visit daily and always the joy of the first teasop stop of the day. Warning: The scones with jam and coddled cream can become addictive! For several days our route followed the dreamy River Tweed toward the North Sea through picturesque gentle countryside. Our last riding day into Berwick Upon Tweed began with an easy and exhilarating run to Holy Island in the North Sea, which is reached by a sea level causeway that is only accessible at low tide. Our final approach to Berwick Upon Tweed, coming from Holy Island along the coast of North Sea, was a stunning finish to unique and miraculously rain free tour.

Participants: Robert McCullough, Patricia Haislmaier, Bill Nast, Mary Love Nast, Daniel Telep, Paul Haislmaier, William Keckler, Archer Yates, John McManus, Brenda Cole, Hilda Yates, John Stephens, Patrice Scully, Josie Ochoa, Keith Enerson, Sara Blakeslee, John Blakeslee, Bill Rowe, Cindy Rowe

Tropical Queensland September 1st to September 14th
Ride Coordinator: Barbara Klaus, Report by: Scott Kariya



Tropical Queensland was a 14-day exploration of the amazing geographic diversity - centuries-old rainforests; serene, lush and rolling countryside; and fishing/coral reef-oriented coastal cities - in Queensland, Australia's warm and sunny northeastern territory. This was not a heavy-cycling trip - biking days averaged 48 miles (mostly even terrain) and 5 days were sightseeing, non-cycling days. Accommodations were mostly deluxe, the weather was warm to sometimes hot, and the pace was leisurely and peaceful.

We snorkeled and dove (two opportunities) on the Great Barrier Reef amongst alien-world coral, bushy anemones and exotic fish right out of "Finding Nemo". We marveled at soaring strangler Fig Trees that begin as sprouts on the branches of other giant trees,

then grow, envelop and replace their once-mighty hosts. We looked for and sometimes found shy Duck-Billed Platypuses quietly swimming in lonely creeks, wallabies (basically, a small kangaroo) hopping inquisitively around the edge of rainforests, screeching flocks of white cockatoos, in addition to the iconic crocodiles, kangaroos and koala. We learned a bit of Aboriginal culture and history, their generations-old understanding of the land and marginalized status in present-day Australia.

The itinerary and pace of the tour were excellent but some of the riding conditions were less than ideal. Many of the paved roads were rough and bumpy, and made for an uncomfortable ride - future riders should be warned to use fatter tires and other cushioning gear. Some roads had little shoulder and speeding lorries - dangerous! Daily maps/questionsheets were fair/OK.

Accommodations were superb - high quality, unusual and delightful! We stayed two nights at a luxurious spa and another two nights in "tree houses" in a private rain forest. I would happily stay at most of them again.

Meals were generally good with some dinners very good. We often ate at a genial, family-oriented restaurant, sometimes at local "high-end" restaurant. My favorite meal was a complete surprise - a drab, turn of the century hotel in tiny Yungaburra (pop. 820) offered the freshest, tastiest batter-fried, locally-caught fish in what resembled an aging VFW hall. En-route lunches were supermarket-bought luncheon meats and cartons of fruit juice. Nutella appeared at every lunch. Alas, we never had "shrimp on the barbee."

Participants: James Hess, Everett Cassel, Gerald rosen, Martha brand, Barbara Klaus, Marcia Tompkins, Gail Preston, Bud Preston, John Muth, Mary Muth, Kim Dailey, Wes Johnson, Scott Kariya, Philip Thomas, Nancy Thomas

Scenic Black Forest With A Taste of Alsace September 1st to September 15th

Ride Director: Patrice Van Vleet, Report by: Vickie Smith



The September 2007 BAC Scenic Black Forest and Taste of Alsace tour started in Freiburg, a lovely and historic university town in the southwest part of Germany.

From there we made a tour of the hills and valleys of the Black Forest, often staying 2 nights in one town, which enabled me to recover from riding. Did I mention that there are hills in the Black Forest? At times we were riding grades up to 15-or rather, I at least was walking. The payoff was absolutely gorgeous views of classic German villages nestled in valleys; I'm just surprised I hadn't made the connection between the Black Forest and hills earlier!

The many sights along the way included Roman ruins, ancient cathedrals, medieval walled towns, village markets,

vineyards, a cuckoo clock museum, an ornamental glass factory, and a farm museum featuring restored buildings and working exhibits. The riding was superb, along lightly trafficked roads and following a scenic network of paved bicycle trails. Treats along the way included the lovely late season flowers adorning all the homes and public buildings, as well as the many examples of sculpture, both historic and modern.

The last 4 days of the cycling trip took us across the Rhine River into the Alsace region of France. The riding was much less strenuous here, for which I was grateful. Not far into Alsace we stopped at the memorial to the famous Maginot Line, which the French built between the World Wars to guard against another German invasion, and which was a tragic failure. After visiting lovely Alsatian towns such as Colmar, Eguisheim, Kayersberg, and Munster, as well as arguably the largest corncrib in Europe, we ended the tour in the small Alsatian town of Wettolsheim.

Participants: John Livingston, Joann DeVries, Lynn Whitney, Rhonda Goldberg, Gerald Anderson, Bryna Livingston, Gilbert Jean, Glenn Guenterberg, Gary Martin, Patrice Van Vleet, John DeVries, Mary Millard, John Barnett, Chris Barnett, Tom Leever, Julie Leever, Steve Teng, Vickie Smith, Frank Lamitola, Daniel Harrison, Jan Shubitowski, Dorothy Stock

Heritage Tour of Wessex & Cotswolds England September 16th to September 29th

Ride Coordinator: Bob Smith, Report by: Victor Villhard



This tour provided for an intensive exploration of dozens of significant and fascinating historic and cultural sites in the heart of England, centered around Bath: site of Britain's only World Heritage city and its only hot spring. Our daily routes typically included options to ride from 40 to 55 miles as they wound through very lightly traveled country lanes in the Cotswolds (Britain's largest "Area of Natural Beauty") and Mendip Hills, the Somerset Level, and Salisbury Plain. These areas are home to roads and settlements dating back to the Roman Empire, picturesque villages made from golden local limestone, Cheddar Gorge, spectacular caverns, Stonehenge and two other mysterious stone circles, the world's most active area for crop circles, historic "wool towns and churches, several magnificent Abbeys and cathedrals, artistic

representations of horses carved high up on white chalk hillsides over the past three centuries and more, and a number of sites related to the Holy Grail, the Round Table and Excalibur in the Arthurian legends.

We rode through beautiful pastoral hillside scenes, deep forest glades, classic English gardens, peat bogs, and along quiet rivers and canals with locks and towpaths, and past lookout towers atop rolling hills. The combination of distance (with options) and occasional short but steep climbs justify a 3B rating. The only places we saw any traffic were on the roads in the two or three small cities we visited. Road conditions were generally good, including many narrow country lanes—some designated as national bike routes. Occasional patches of broken pavement, mud and gravel could be viewed as challenging for road bikes, particularly in wet conditions. The canal towpath between Bath and Devizes is unpaved, but very scenic and definitely worth riding even though road alternatives exist. Drivers were extremely courteous, and locals were friendly and outgoing, making the trip all the more enjoyable.

The maps and cue sheets provided by the commercial operator, Tony Boyd of Iron Donkey, were uniformly accurate and adequate. A few riders found themselves off the route with some regularity, but it was always simple to find the way back again. Tony's verbal directions enabled everyone to make it to the location where the cue instructions started in each town, and to the hotel each night, but maps and/or written instructions would have been helpful. Tony's brother-in-law, Ian, rode the routes each day, and he was very helpful in route-finding. He and Tony are really great guys and both are a real pleasure to be around!

Accommodations varied from small to palatial, as they included a Georgian country house, a 15th century lodge for the Wells Cathedral, a 16th century inn, and some more modern hotels, but all were very nice, unique, and memorable. Stays alternated between one and two nights in each place, providing flexible options for more riding, sight-seeing, or rest time. Meals were practically always outstanding. A hearty cooked-to-order breakfast was included every day, two picnic lunches were provided, and the combination of group dinners and on-your-own dining gave everyone a chance to sample a wide variety of local pubs and restaurants.

Thanks to Bob and Anne Smith for coordinating such an outstanding tour, with fun happy hours each day, and to Iron Donkey for providing the maps, route briefings, and luggage transfers—usually including delivery to our rooms! Tony went above and beyond to help the few riders who encountered mechanical or health issues, and in arranging transfers to ensure everyone could make their travel connections at both ends of the tour. Overall, this tour was a great value in a very scenic, bike-friendly and culturally-rich area.

Participants: Bill Faulkner, William Keckler, Tom TeBockhorst, Douglas McLane, Susan McLane, Ruth Rittenhouse, Steve Teng, Bob Smith, Carol Means, Brenda Cole, John McManus, Anne Smith, Diane Villhard, Victor Villhard, Joyce Keckler, Cynthia Campbell, Richard Campbell, Rick Hill, Ronald Guidotti, Dennis Johnston, Cappy Johnston, John Stephens, Fran Steel, Kate Faulkner