

# 2022 International Selkirk Loop

June 7-22, 2022

Trip report submitted by W. Neal Fisher

Spokane Washington was sunny as leader Sue Buntgen presented us with wine glasses, thermos drink cups, and lunch tupperware. Then she and co-leaders Margaret Slack and Garry Clifton, British Columbians all, led us (by various routes) to dinner at Anthony's overlooking the roaring Spokane Falls. We would spend the next two weeks bicycling in the Columbia River basin, usually following a stream, river, or alongside a lake reflecting the scenery surrounding us.

On June 8 we headed east on bike trails out of Spokane and turned north toward Newport, Washington, 52 miles distant. We started with a wet trail but they were dry before we stopped for lunch in Elk at our support van. It was a perfect riding day and we had the entire Antler Motel to ourselves.

Each night had a happy hour, ride review, ride preview, and we stowed our lunches in the truck before heading to dinner. The next morning was dry and we continued north 51 miles to Lone, WA paralleling the mighty Pend Oreille River the entire way. We thought we were being escorted by the police but it was actually a long funeral procession for a native fire fighter. Our last 20 miles was in a light rain and we were happy to see a garden hose and towels provided by the Riverview Hotel. This would not be the first night that our leaders had to improvise a happy hour location.

On day three, June 10 we crossed into Canada en masse at Nelway and on to Nelson, our longest distance of the tour, 65 miles. The roads were wet as we started and the mountain trees held the clouds but it slowly cleared, the sun emerged, and we had a spectacular cycling day. We followed the Pend Oreille River

north and like us, its also crossed into Canada. We climbed gradually for 20 miles for an exhilarating seven mile dive-bomb into Nelson. Some of us stopped at the Backroads Brewery, sat outside, and convinced many of our riders to join in the revelry.

We woke up to our first “rest” day. Some biked west out of Nelson, some biked east, some shopped and toured, and one kayaked on The Kootenay River. No one avoided the showers that would occasionally sweep through. It was probably this night that our weather person tried to give up the job but there were no takers (no surprise as there was moisture in part of every day so far).

We had another long day, 62 miles to New Denver. We knew there would be rain. Some started early, some tried to time it. We all got wet, some more than others as we followed the Kootenay west for 13 miles and then turned north to follow the Slocan River to New Denver. Amazingly, the sun came out strong and the rain gear and arm warmers got packed away. We discovered two new routes north, a road on the west side of the Slocan, and a bike trail on the east side. Once again our day finished with a long climb and a steep descent to the Valhalla Inn.

June 13 was a nice short day, how hard could it be? Just a ten mile climb and a 20 mile gentle descent into Kaslo. We woke up to wind and rain. The crosswind and the climb got us wet and the temperature at the top was 41° F. Thank goodness our truck was there with the heat on full blast. We all tried to change to warmer, drier gear. We discovered that rubber dishwashing gloves and a hotel shower cap worked the best.

Our seventh day was another short one, just 28 miles to Balfour. As usual it started damp with wet roads and a spit of rain that soon disappeared. We enjoyed a short walk to Fletcher Falls. Our digs were the Kootenay Lakeview Resort with a great view and Susan bought us an authentic Mexican dinner at the nearby golf course. We celebrated a birthday and a wedding anniversary.

June 15 started overcast and everyone was geared up for the worst. But this was our first day without any moisture and the clouds parted to reveal the snow covered mountain tops. We crossed the world's longest free ferry to the east side of Kootenay Lake. Turning south, we followed the lake for 50 miles until the land slowly rose and the Kootenay River meandered about the fertile Creston farmland.

Our ninth day, 42 miles to Bonners Ferry, would also be dry. Wow, our luck had really changed! We took a peaceful and beautiful route out of Creston and crossed the border into Idaho. We all agreed the US Border agents were the friendliest and happiest we have ever met. Today we saw huge hops farms, had lunch on the bank of the Kootenay River, got in some gravel riding, and saw more snow-capped mountains and waterfalls. Someone saw a yellow headed back bird in the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge. And we rescued a dropped bike bag (with passport).

Friday, June 17 was a mix of sun and clouds and *no rain*. We were scheduled for another two-night stay in Sandpoint on gigantic Lake Pend Oreille, the fifth deepest lake in the United States. Many of us took optional routes to avoid busy Route 2/95. Of course this required some dirt road riding but it was worth it. The 42 mile route was capped with a wonderful paved bike path into town. We also had guest speakers at happy hour, former B.A.C. leaders Woody and Marney (who made us cookies!).

Our optional day in Sanpoint included riding up Schweitzer Mountain, a farm market right next to our hotel, boat cruises on the lake, and Woody escorted some of us on a bike tour of the south shore. We enjoyed Evans Brothers coffee, the Bluebird Bakery, and the restaurants. And it did not rain.

Our penultimate day, 59 miles to Coeur d'Alene, started with high clouds and a cool breeze. It did not matter what time we rolled out, we all got wet at some point. We were treated to

lawnmower races in Spirit Lake, some dirt roads, the Trickster Brewery, and finished on a wide, paved bike trail right to our hotel.

Finally we finished our tour by following the paved Centennial Bike Trail alongside the Spokane River for 35 miles. Many of us deviated to the south shore and a couple of us unintentionally deviated (got lost?) for a really long day that included . . . rain, of course.

To sum it up we all had a great tour and even though we had moisture on eight of twelve days, we considered ourselves lucky for most of our cycling was on dry roads. Our leaders did a great, enthusiastic job, the group was wonderful, and the routes, original and amended, were super.

Respectfully submitted by tour reporter W. Neal Fisher. I am well over the 600 word limit (about double that). But I feel I left out so much humor, so much camaraderie, so many laughs, and so much cycling, to do less would be an injustice. Written on June 29, 2022, a day with no rain in Ivoryton, Connecticut.