

HIT THE ROAD THIS SUMMER

Quiet & Scenic Cycling Routes Near Gravenhurst

Allison Dawes

With the long weekend and July upon us, it is truly Road Riding Month around the world and right here in Muskoka too! The Tour de France is on for the next 3 weeks (July 2nd ~ July 24th), so how could I not talk about touring right here in our own back yard? You will be pleasantly surprised by Muskoka's scenic roads, the kilometre upon kilometre you can ride without seeing a single vehicle...and no climbs like the Pyrenees!

In my last installment of cycling in Muskoka, I discussed the various roads and trails around our region which are ideal for cycling. As promised, this week I would begin our journey around Muskoka bringing you an in depth look at various regional cycling routes. Our territory of exploration this week is Gravenhurst.

The roadways near Gravenhurst offer an abundance of extraordinarily quiet and newly paved routes. Muskoka Road #6, also known as Doe Lake Road was recently resurfaced and arguably offers some of the smoothest road riding in Muskoka. Doe Lake Road stretches for approximately 16 kilometres straight out to Muskoka Road #20, passing through beautiful farmland on meandering road with many gentle rolling hills. Doe Lake Road, along with the Gravenhurst Parkway (approx. 6.5 km) are ideal for cyclist using structured training programs. Both roadways are relatively flat, with new black-top, easily allowing for interval and zone training methods.

My favourite road find is Barkway Road. Barkway Road rates in my book as a must ride. The road is approximately 9.5 kilometres in length, was recently paved, and snakes through peaceful farm and woodland. It was absolutely picturesque, and astoundingly traffic free. While riding Barkway Road I only saw two other vehicles and a curious "Caution Cattle Crossing" sign.

Germania Road offers more of the same serene riding. While the road surface is not perfect for 23x700 tires pumped to 120psi, the calm, traffic free landscape is well worth the little bit of road vibration you will likely experience.

I personally explored the area upon my hybrid, a wonderful mixture of mountain bike comfort and durability, and road bike speed. This bicycle allowed me to travel where ever I so desired, including over various gravel sections and rougher pavement, treating myself to even quieter roads.

I strongly encourage any road riding enthusiast to get out and enjoy this area surrounding Gravenhurst. You can easily craft a route to meet your training, distance, and scenic needs. Kindly remember to ride with courtesy and attentiveness. Be sure to carry a map, pump, spare tube, mini-tool, a snack, and lots of water, as this summer promises to be a hot one. Inform a friend or relative of your expected route and ride time in the event of the unexpected.

If you'd rather take in some cycling from the comfort of your cottage be sure to tune into the greatest cycling race in history broadcasted daily on the Outdoor Life Network. Live coverage of the Tour de France airs daily from 8:30am until 11:30. The tour re-airs continually throughout the day for all you cycling junkies that just can't get enough, and the race is re-broadcasted during prime time from 8:00pm until 11:00pm for folks that were out enjoying a ride of their own, or a dip in the lake during the live showing. Oh, and for you night owls it airs yet again from midnight until 2:00am.

Don't miss the numerous cycling events taking place across our region this summer. There is ample opportunity to catch the excitement of live racing right on our Muskoka doorstep. Get out and participate and spectate. Most of the events, including triathlons, duathlons, and mountain bike racing have categories for all ages and all abilities (yes, even first timers, oldtimers and children).

Whether it be for fun, exercise, or training be sure to get out and ride your bicycle in Muskoka. In need of a little extra guidance when it comes to cycling in Muskoka? Drop by Ecclestone Cycle (that big purple house in Bracebridge), the owners and staff are happy to lend their expertise. Whether you're in need of bicycles for rent, repairs, or just need directions to the local trail heads, stop in and say hello. The Ecclestone Cycle website(www.ecclestonecycle.com) details a plethora of Muskoka cycling information. Ride your bicycle in Muskoka, enjoyment guaranteed! Happy Spins!