

Route 28 through New York's Adirondacks

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Route 28 traverses New York State's Adirondack Mountain region through its center from West to East. Over the course of two days, I had the opportunity to motorcycle the 110-plus miles of this diverse and scenic road. The history and stories of the region go deep and an exploration on two wheels yielded rich results.

My course was Route 28 from Forestport to Warrensburg. In Barneveld, I picked up Route 12/28. Heading North at Alder Creek, 28 and I split off, heading west.

Past Forestport, the six million-acre Adirondack Park begins. Best known for its mountains, the highest peaks in New York are here. It is the largest forest preserve in the East—the size of the state of Vermont. The New York State Legislature created the Adirondack Park in 1882, guaranteeing that these public lands will remain forever wild.

Numerous interesting and quaint towns dot the path along Route 28. After Otter Creek, I happened upon an old railroad line at Thendara (meaning "rim of the forest"). The station and Van Auken's Inne (1891) next to it have been preserved. An impressive 1905 relocation saw the three-story Inne dragged 75 feet on logs by teams of horses. Both the Inne and the station have experienced a revitalization, as enchanting tours are offered on the Adirondack Scenic Railroad.

In the first part of last century, people flocked to the Adirondack Mountains as a demonstration and representation of social status. The "camps" and resorts that grew up and flourished along Route

28 included names such as the Mohawk Inn (1896), the Araho (O'Hara, the owner's name spelled backwards—very Indian sounding!), the Albedor (the owner's three daughters Alice, Betty and Dorothy), Paownyc (named for the railroads that used the owner's foldaway step invention—Pennsylvania, Ohio Western and New York Central lines), the Arrowhead, the Sagamore (a Vanderbilt estate), Rocky Point and the Neodak Hotel.

The Fulton Chain Lakes, beginning after Old Forge, are a series of eight-ponded waters consecutively numbered (First through Eighth Lake), along Route 28. Further on, the town of Old Forge boasts numerous craft shops, eateries and the rather impressive 1923 Strand Movie Theater (www.strandoldforge.com).

Bob Card and Helen Zyma, owners and operators of the Strand, have done their best to bring back the original splendor and appearance of the cinema

house. The result is a single-screen theater, as it has been for all its life. Three newer theaters provide additional screens for viewers but in the building next door. Bravo to those who respect the past! Stop in and visit Bob and Helen. They're eager and proud to show off the years of hard work they've spent in restoring this gem of the North.

Old Forge also is home to Old Forge Hardware, housed in the Cohen building. Here is a store that seems to have *everything*—including a rather extensive book collection. Exiting town, one will find the Arts Center, just north of the village. For 24 years, this has been the home to one of the top national water media exhibitions, the Adirondacks National Exhibition of American Watercolors, which draws competitors from all corners of the country. The Center also hosts a rather popular quilt show as well.

In Eagle Bay, on the way to Inlet,



there is a left turn for Big Moose Road. Five miles down, one will find the Inn, on Big Moose Lake, which is a charming and cozy setting, as well as a terrific place to get dinner. The lake is the site of the murderous events that were fictionalized in the novel, *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser. The real villain, Chester Gillette, drowned his pregnant lover in Big Moose Lake and was caught later in the hamlet of Inlet.

One of the "camps" I visited was on Fourth Lake, owned by a "downstater," Mrs. Vagt of Scarsdale. Her family acquired the 200 feet of lakefront property when the Mohawk Inn & Country Club fell on hard times. In the late 1970s, owner Allen Wilcox divested the hotel of its outbuildings and ultimately; the main building went to Camp Mark Seven (for the deaf). Vagt's cottages, Iroquois and Shenandoah, face the north side of the lake and offer stunning views. In the thriving days of the hotel, the property's buildings had Indian-sounding names. Ogeewashtet was the building where Mrs. G ran the laundry services for the Mohawk. I was fortunate enough to spend a night at the Vagt camp as a guest.

That night, we shared an excellent meal at Seventh Lake House, a log restaurant. During the warmer months, dining on the enclosed veranda can be quite a treat. Delicious salads, steaks and desserts ensured that we left fully sated. My steak was done to perfection, whereas Mrs. Vagt opted for a fish and pasta plate.

The next day of motorcycling brought me further on 28 to Raquette Lake, another lesson in New York name history. After the revolution, Torries who refused to live under a president and wanted their king, started walking to Canada. When they got as far as what we now know as Raquette Lake, a spring thaw set in and they had to take off, stack and leave their snowshoes. The word for "snowshoe" in French is *raquette*.

At Blue Mountain Lake (where 28 meets route 30), one will find the world-class Adirondack Museum. *The New York Times* called the museum "the best of its kind in the world." Among the 20 buildings, set on 32 acres, the Museum Library houses more publications, maps and other printed material about the Adirondacks than in any other single location, as well as over 65,000 historic



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Lakefront property offers stunning views with, of course, the well known "Adirondack Chairs" named for this region.



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Adirondacks

photographs.

Along the way, past Indian Lake and on the way to North River (where 28 parallels the Hudson), I couldn't help but stop at the wooden chair at the side of the road. It occurred to me that if I started to sing, "Shout," I would be singing *Songs from the Big Chair* (sorry, had to).

Between Blue Mountain Lake and Indian Lake, the area is considered a prime habitat for moose, often called "Monarch of the North Country." Yearly, numerous moose sightings are reported. Indian Lake and other sources feed the Hudson River, so rafting adventure trips are the name of the game here.

North River leads to North Creek, home of Gore Mountain Ski Area and

the North Creek Railroad Depot. After Wevertown and Friends Lake, Route 28 ends. A right turn on Route 9 brings the rider into the metropolis of Warrensburg, ending the twisty and curvy ride across the heart of the Adirondack Mountains. The central portion of this area, once called John Brown's Tract, is a 210,000-acre property in northern New York State, purchased on mortgage for \$200,000 in 1798.

Some would suggest using these roads as a fall foliage excursion. Others would encourage the summer activities commonly associated with lakeside fun. Of course, in the dead of winter, there's always skiing and snowmobiling. No matter when, visitors to the area should prepare themselves for a look back in history that will explain some of the evolution of this vast and impressive locale. ●



An area that definitely prizes its chairs, I couldn't help but stop at the huge wooden chair by the side of the road for a photo-op.



(L-R) Bob Card and Helen Zyma, owners and operators of the Strand, pose with me in front of their 1923 cinema house.



The town of Old Forge boasts numerous craft shops and eateries.



In the thriving days of the Mohawk Inn & Country Club, the property's buildings had Indian-sounding names. Ogeewashe was the building where laundry services were done for the Mohawk.