

Shifting Gears

The Columbia
County
50



Article by Frans Verstraeten and Jim Hahn

This page: Racing through Bloomsburg compliments of the Dutch Wheelman Bicycle Shop



Cycling enthusiasts from miles away visit Columbia County each year to test their skills on one of the region's most popular bicycle routes, the Columbia County 50. This unmarked ride offers cyclists a scenic and challenging route through the region. Flat straight-aways give way to stamina-testing climbs and speedy descents along the course. Riders pass rolling farmland and through covered bridges during the fifty mile ride that loops around beautiful Columbia County.

The tradition of the Columbia County 50 began in the 1980's in Berwick as a competitive race. As the turnout for the race increased to well over three-hundred riders, the need for a route change was necessary. Through the years the course was modified to begin and end at the Bloomsburg Town Park. Another significant change was the addition of Jonestown Mountain. With an approximate length of 1.65 miles and an estimated incline of 10%, cyclists were offered a substantial challenge and more experienced riders were drawn to the route.

Although no longer a competitive race, riders of all skill levels still meet at the Bloomsburg Town Park and set out on the fifty mile trek. Riders head north through the village of Lightstreet where it crosses Fishing Creek and bends through country roads past Peacock Corners into the village of Orangeville. From there it's on to Forks and the Twin Covered Bridges, one of only two sets nationally, giving riders a hint of the most challenging climb of the ride, Jonestown Mountain. After a long, grueling ascent, riders are treated to a welcome and speedy downhill along the side of the

mountain toward Briar Creek Lake and into Fowlersville. The route then continues along open fields through Mifflinville and loops back high above the Susquehanna River climbing the ridge of Route 339 towards Mainville. Following a stony creek into Catawissa, riders reach the final leg of the Columbia County 50. Zipping along the Susquehanna River, cyclists cross Fishing Creek through the Rupert Covered Bridge and head back toward the finishing point at the Bloomsburg Town Park.

Many cyclists come year after year to test their endurance and improve their times. It's a day ride spent meandering through the many country roads and tree lined drives along the trout filled streams and lakes of rural Columbia County. Riders of all experience levels are welcome to see if they have what it takes to complete this route, but please keep in mind that this local favorite utilizes roads that have no special accommodations for bicycles. Those that enjoy the Columbia County 50 may also be interested in the 75 Miles of Montour race. This race is part of the River Town Race Series and has nearly 6,000 feet of climbing. Route maps and trail guides for these rides, plus a variety of others, are available by visiting the Columbia-Montour Visitor's Bureau.

Did you know . . .

- Our visitor centers have over 20 different bike route maps available!
- The Dutch Wheelman Bicycle Shop has sponsored a road racing team for nearly 20 years, with racers moving through the ranks to compete regionally, nationally and in international circuits!
- Ricketts Glen State Park has over 13,050 acres for hiking, swimming and equestrian trails with 22 named waterfalls!
- Jakey Hollow has a 58-acre hollow with old growth white pine, eastern hemlock and northern hardwoods along a small stream!
- The Rivertown Race Series is a group of races that takes place around the Susquehanna River, providing outdoor challenges from 5K's to epic struggles!



Racers waiting to start the 75 Miles of Montour by David Kurecian