

JOYRIDES

#14

A 60-mile roll from Poughkeepsie along the Shawangunk plateau to Beacon, with some bushwhacking and trail riding carriage trails for the extra-adventurous. Attracting rock climbers with its sheer cliffs, the 'Gunks offer cyclists challenging terrain, expansive mountain views, and superb access to the great outdoors.

Over the River and Through the 'Gunks

by Jon Orcutt

START: Take Metro-North Hudson Line to Poughkeepsie. (See page 19 about REQUIRED bike passes.)

From downtown Poughkeepsie, **TAKE** U.S.44/NY55 to the Poughkeepsie Bridge, which crosses the Hudson just south of the train station.

GET ON SIDEWALK on right as you approach bridge. This is an narrow "single-track" lane, and signs indicate that bikes must be walked. Whatever you do, please be cautious and courteous to pedestrians. Signs also say "Bridge path closes at dusk," and there are lockable gates, so don't plan a midnight mountain ride.

FOLLOW the beat-up service road away from bridge path, curves slightly left up shallow hill.

At the traffic signal, go **RIGHT** on highway.

Bear **LEFT** a half-mile ahead on Rtes 44/55 (main highway continues straight).

CONTINUE on Rtes 44/55 roughly 20 miles through beautiful countryside. The Shawangunk ridge appears in front of you, then the road gradually switchbacks up onto plateau. The climb wasn't as bad as I expected.

See NOTE below if you'd like to divert onto Minnewaska State Park trails at this point.

NOTE: Minnewaska State Park and the Mohonk Nature Preserve atop the Shawangunk ridge are criss-crossed by "carriageways" — dirt and gravel paths that are suitable for hybrids. In the Mohonk area, park rangers may dun you for registration (\$5/day) and bike (\$10/season) fees.

If you want to link the road ride described here with riding on the trail system, get the NY/NJ Trail Conference maps of the Shawangunks. When I tried to link a road-and-trail ride with a route through the back (western) slope of the 'Gunks, I found those trails almost impossible on a hybrid. When the trail disappeared, my friend and I bushwhacked down a series of wooded cliffs, handing the bikes down to each other. We found some beautiful brooks, swimming holes and a 100-foot waterfall that we wouldn't have found on the bikeable terrain, but this type of excursion isn't for everyone. We found our way to an old quarry access road on the back slope, and continued the road ride from there.

CONTINUE on Rte. 44/55 over the ridge, with views of the Catskills while you go down back side of slope.

LEFT on Foordemore Road, and go on for about 3 miles.

Another **LEFT** on Berme Road to Ellenville.

LEFT on Rte. 52. The first few miles out of Ellenville are a steady, challenging climb back onto the Shawangunk ridge, followed by awesome 2-mile drop.

CONTINUE on Rte. 52 for about 30 miles into Newburgh. The road turns into South Street in town.

LEFT on Robinson Ave.

RIGHT on North Street.

LEFT on Grand Ave. Watch for entrance to bridge path on left.

CROSS the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge

RIGHT onto Rte 9D, go for about a half-mile.

WATCH FOR SIGN for Metro-North Beacon station on right.

RIGHT on access road to Beacon station for the train return to NYC.