

BOYS' LIFE

FOR
ALL
BOYS

AUGUST 1984

\$1.00

A CYCLE TOUR
ON THE MAINE
SEACOAST

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ISSUE:**

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THROUGH
COLORADO SPRINGS

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OLD FRIENDS

MEET A BOY

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BIKE HIKING DOWN EAST

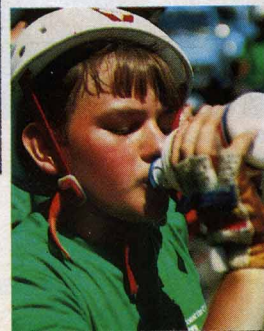
THE NEW YORK SCOUTS CALLED THEIR TOUR, "COAST THE COAST," BUT THEY FOUND OUT THAT IT'S NOT ALL DOWNHILL WHEN YOU RIDE THE ROCK-BOUND SHORES OF MAINE.

BY ROBERT W. PETERSON

Photographs by Gene Daniels



Above: Troop 7 glides along the Maine seacoast at Acadia National Park, one of the goals of their 425-mile summer tour. Left: In nine days on the road, everybody learned how to stretch to take the kinks out of sore muscles. Below: The Scouts drank gallons of water on the uphill stretches. Right: Every night there was a new camp at a new campground. Camp skills were sharpened up. Far right: A map mistake sent them on a cross-country detour.





FOR SUMMER FUN nothing beats a brisk, 425-mile bicycle hike. Especially if there are new things to see and plenty of adventures along the way.

That's the word from 16 Scouts and two leaders of Troop 7 of Fly Creek, N.Y. The central New York-state Scouts spent nine days last summer on back roads along the Atlantic Ocean in Maine. When it was over, they were ready to take off again.

The ride was fun, but the things to do and see were even better. Take, for instance, a side trip on foot up the sheer rock face of Champlain Mountain in Acadia National Park. "That was one of the highlights," said the senior patrol leader, 16-year-old Eagle Scout Chris Johnson. "It was great!"

The way up Champlain Mountain is called the Precipice Trail. "Precipice" means almost straight up and down, and the Scouts found that whoever named it wasn't kidding.

The Precipice Trail is only eight-tenths of a mile long. But it took Troop 7, chartered to Fly Creek United Methodist Church, more than an hour to inch from rock to rock up the 1,058-foot mountain. Even with metal bars driven into the rocks for handholds in some places, it's a tough climb. But at the top the climber is rewarded with a breathtaking view of Frenchman Bay.



**THE TRIP WASN'T PLANNED AS AN
ENDURANCE CONTEST, BUT IT WASN'T FOR
ANYBODY WHO WAS OUT OF SHAPE
EITHER. PLENTY OF TRAINING
WENT INTO THE PREPARATIONS.**

At the foot of Champlain Mountain waited 18 bikes, ready to take the Scouts to nearby Sand Beach for a refreshing plunge into the chill ocean waters. And just around the corner was Thunder Hole where waves crash under rocks with a booming roar, and where mussels and clams await the digger. The day ended with a big feed. What was the menu? In Maine, lobsters, of course.

Acadia National Park is 40,000 acres of paradise for hikers, campers and nature lovers. Troop 7 spent two days exploring the attractions, swimming in the ocean and inland lakes, and camping in clean, shady sites.

On the road, Troop 7 looked like a green, 36-legged centipede a half-mile long. Each Scout and leader wore a green T-shirt lettered in white: "Coast the Coast '83 — Boy Scout Troop 7, Fly Creek, New York." For riding comfort, he wore nylon shorts. For safety, he had a cyclist's helmet.

The value of the helmets was shown when Life Scout Tim Iversen, 14, swerved to avoid another rider and crashed into a stone wall. He got a nick in his helmet the size of a quarter instead of a nasty scalp wound—or worse.

The troop's 425-mile route wound north along the Maine coast from Boothbay Harbor to Cobscook Bay. The final day was spent on Campobello Island where President Franklin D. Roosevelt vacationed. Although it's just off the Maine coast, Campobello belongs to Canada, so Troop 7's bike hike became an international trip.

As the crow flies, Boothbay is only 180 miles from Campobello. Troop 7's bike hikers may have been flying sometimes, but not like crows. Instead, they followed winding, hilly roads through fishing villages. They detoured every few miles to visit a nature center, oceanographic institute, museum, fish hatchery or scenic area.

On their first day on the road Troop 7 covered 91 miles. They had a couple of 70-mile days, too. Most days, though, they traveled only 20 to 25 miles. The idea wasn't to rack up mileage but to see the

sights of a beautiful part of America.

Each cyclist had a small handlebar bag with tools and a snack. On the bike's frame was a water bottle. Even with the sipping water, a pit stop every 10 or 15 miles was welcomed by the Scouts because you sweat gallons pedaling uphill in the summer heat. And sometimes it seemed that all the roads were uphill.

A van driven by Bruce Guyot, father of a Scout, followed the bike hikers from camp to camp. The van carried packs, a spare bike, which was never needed, and food for camp meals. "We found on our shakedown trip before we started that there was no way we could carry packs and all our food on our bikes," said Scoutmaster Robert W. Iversen.

All the Scouts earned the Cycling and Oceanography merit badges on the trip. Before leaving home they had done the book and handwork requirements. They finished the Cycling merit badge on their first day on the road, and passed the last test for Oceanography by visiting a marine institute.

For good measure, the Scouts all earned the Historic Trails Award, too. Their service project for that patch was cleaning and marking a trail in Acadia National Park.

The bike hike wasn't planned as an endurance test, but it wasn't a kiddie-car ride either. So one of the requirements to make the trip was good physical fitness and lots of practice riding. "A couple of guys stayed home, basically because they found they couldn't keep up on the practice rides," said Eagle Scout William Vaules, 15.

Before the trip the Scouts spent a lot of time in the saddle around Cooperstown, N.Y., where many of the Scouts live. Their final test was a two-day, 100-mile shakedown ride.

The youngest rider, 12-year-old Graham Jones, was determined to go along. To make sure he wouldn't be cut, he trained by riding 20 miles a day to and from school all spring. He met another requirement—Second Class rank—with no time to spare.

Graham had passed all the Second Class tests, and the day the bikers left home was the last day of the two-month minimum he needed in the Tenderfoot rank.

Also required for the trip was a bicycle with at least ten speeds. Five Scouts had to earn money to buy one. All the bikers had to learn bike safety and how to make repairs. For those requirements, they got help from a cycle club and the Coopers-town police chief.

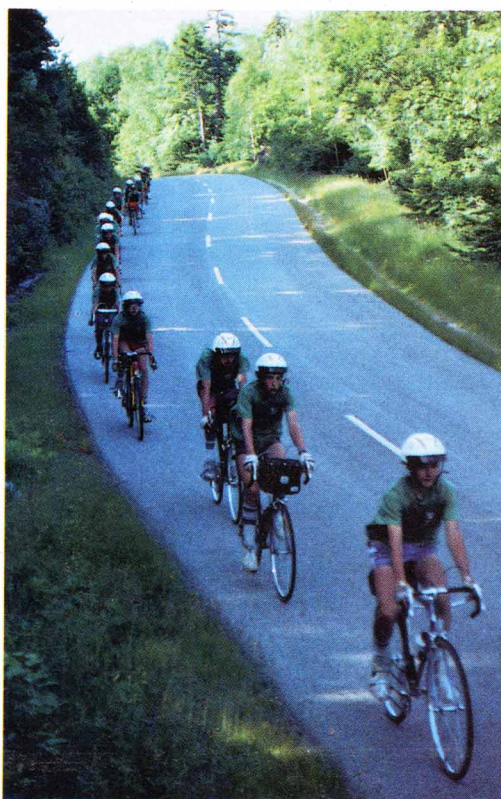
If you're thinking that Troop 7 was really prepared, you're right. For other troops considering a bike hike, Scoutmaster Iversen and his assistant, Dr. Dennis Savoie, have two pieces of advice: "Plan carefully. Take a shakedown trip to get the bugs out."

Nine days on the road cost each Scout \$150. That included all meals, camp fees, and car transportation on the 10-hour ride to and from Maine. All 18 bikes were carried on a 20-foot wooden platform Mr. Iversen built atop his car. "Now *that* was a sight," he said.

The troop's families held fund-raisers to help pay the cost. There were bake sales, lawn sales, car washes, and sales of stickers with emergency phone numbers. Each time a Scout worked on a fund-raiser, he got credit toward the trip. If he worked on all of them, he paid nothing.

"Everybody had a great time," Chris Johnson said, "and I'm sure we'll want to take another bike hike next summer. But I think we'll stay closer to home to cut the cost." All those fund-raisers were a drag. Chris added, "Next year we'll probably want to cover more miles, because we've shown we can do it and we'll have more fun if we ride further."

Memories of last summer's bike hike will last a long time. And there may be another lasting result around Cooperstown. "When the Scouts started practice rides wearing their helmets, they got a lot of razzing," Scoutmaster Iversen said. "But I noticed that after a while, all the other kids were wearing them. Helmets are now quite fashionable around Cooperstown." ♣



Top: Look but don't remove was the rule for exploring tide pools. Above, left: Champlain Mountain's

Precipice Trail was studded with iron handholds. Above, center: Always ride right—way right—was the law of

the tour. Above, right: All along the coast were lobster pounds and great seafood treats.