



The 2012 Laurel Highlands BMW Campout

Laurel Highlands BMW Riders #294

BMW Main Street

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ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF LIVING in Pittsburgh, Pa., is that you are on the edge the Laurel Highlands. This mountainous area of southwestern Pennsylvania is southeast of Pittsburgh, with Laurel Hill and Chestnut Ridge of the Allegheny Mountains acting as the spine of the region. These are among the highest mountains in Pennsylvania, with Somerset County's Mount Davis. At 3,213 feet, being the highest point in the state.

The Pioneer Park Campground, home of the Laurel Highlands BMW riders' campout is a full service camping resort with excellent bathhouses, a swimming pool and tennis courts. The most impressive draw was the real pinball machine in the camp store's game room. This location is also convenient for a large part of the eastern population centers; the District of Columbia, Baltimore and Cleveland are approximately 180 miles distant. Harrisburg is 135 miles, away, Columbus 214, and New York City a wee bit over 300. The Laurel Highlands BMW Campout is perfectly situated for

your first trip, either to explore this beautiful area, sort out your machine and gear, or both.

Friday night the riders were treated to a tasty stew made with cans of ingredients brought by all riders along with what seemed like an endless supply hot dogs and kraut. As the light failed, a great fire was built for all the folks to sit around, keep warm and discuss the sights enjoyed on the way to this perfect weekend. Jason Kaplitz and George Blackham, club officers, always seemed to be present along with other members prompting one to eat, get a drink or buy a 10th anniversary T-shirt. The club members were also ready to help with any problems or questions that could arise.

Somerset and its surrounding counties have many places and things to see, including historical sites from the Revolutionary War to more recent events that have been burned into our minds. Saturday morning departures were delayed after coffee (available 24 hours per day) and homemade donuts from a local Mennonite bakery.

The Johnstown Flood Museum and the Johnstown Flood National Memorial commemorate the collapse of the South Fork Dam and the tragic events that followed. South Fork meant money way before TV's *Dallas* program, as this Pennsylvania town was the summer home to many of Pittsburgh's robber baron families who neglected the dam to the extreme detriment of Johnstown's residents.

Ohiopyle is a rafting and bicycling center to the south along the Youghiogheny River, which races through a wonderful mountain valley. George Washington thought that the river held great promise for further exploration of the West until he discovered the waterfall and rapids of this class-three white water river. Outdoor supply stores and restaurants serve the public in this quaint little town hard alongside the dreaded waterfall. Bracketing this great town are two of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpieces outlined in the first of two daylong tours.



High quality T-shirts were available to commemorate the 10th anniversary campout.



Beautiful camping spaces were available.



The pavilion was the base for all operations and site of the great Saturday night catered chicken and roast beef dinner, followed by the award program.

Frank Lloyd Wright Tour, 70 miles

- **Kentuck Knob** was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built by the Hagans, who owned Johnstown's Hagan Ice Cream Company. This wonderful residence is located in Chalk Hill, Pa., a few miles southwest of Ohio-pyle. Local stonemasons and workers built this house with the perfect combination of native stone, red cypress and many windows topped off with a copper roof. Kentuck Knob was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 and is one of the last homes to be completed by Wright.
- **Fallingwater** was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built in 1935 by Kaufmann family of Pittsburgh's Kaufman Department Stores. This cantilevered

house was built a few miles north of Ohio-pyle. The masterpiece juts partly over a waterfall on Bear Run in the Mill Run section of Fayette County, Pa. This breathtaking house is listed among the Smithsonian's Life List of 28 places "to visit before you die." One among many awards too numerous to mention.

French and Indian War Tour, 105 miles

- **Fort Ligonier** is a British fortification from the French and Indian War located in Ligonier, Pa. The fort served as a staging area for the Forbes Expedition of 1758.
- **Fort Necessity** National Battlefield is in Fayette County, Pa., which preserves elements of the Battle of Fort Necessity. The battle, which took place on July 3, 1754,

was an early battle of the French and Indian War and resulted in the surrender of the British, under Colonel George Washington, to the French and Indians, under Louis Coulon de Villiers.

More recent history is commemorated at the Flight 93 National Memorial just 30 minutes from the campout. Captain Stephen Ruda of the Los Angeles City Fire Department says it all "A common field one day, a field of honor forever."

For the adventure riders there are 24 covered bridges in Somerset and Bedford Counties, with their locations given on each of the counties' websites. Wandering around these perfect Appalachian Mountains searching for bridges built in the 1800s is a great way to experience these mountain ridges. You will bump into some wonderful people, and who knows what might happen while bridge exploring for the day.

A local restaurant catered a perfect Saturday dinner of chicken, roast beef and potatoes with all of the trimmings. This meal was held in the pavilion, which was the nerve site for the weekend. The food was followed with the awarding of many door prizes and other friendly banter, making all in attendance feel welcome.

Following a Sunday morning pancake and sausage breakfast with juice and coffee, I leisurely packed while watching the folks with many more miles ahead of them depart with full stomachs and a warm feeling of a good time had. I departed with the intent of looking for the long road and succeeded as a member told me of a Father's Day Fly-in, car show and pancake/sausage feed at the Somerset Airport. It was the perfect stop, as I like old automobiles and airplanes, and the stop extended both my time and miles ridden while returning home.

My last stop was at Laughlintown's Pie Shop to ponder this perfect BMW weekend while planning next year's visit to the enjoyable Laurel Highlands BMW Campout. I wondered how anyone could not want to attend this celebration of our bikes, as it is the perfect destination and place to stay while visiting one of the 28 places that one must visit before you die. ☺