

Biking

Insider's view of Red House

by Lisa Borgia

Mountain biking is fast becoming one of today's most popular recreational activities. Many mountain bikers are satisfied with riding on the roads or paved trails of some public parks, but for bikers yearning for wooded trails to ride on, it is becoming more and more difficult to find the elusive "perfect ride."

If you own a 500 acre spread or are close friends with some one who does, you don't need to know about the mountain biking at Red House. However, if you are a biker looking for a choice riding experience, read on.

Red House is located in Allegheny State Park, just west of Salamanca, New York. The Red House area itself is a portion of Allegheny State Park that includes the Quaker Run area, and is adjacent to the Salamanca Indian reservation.

When you step into the woods at Red House, you leave behind roads, traffic, phone lines, and civilization. There are ten trail systems in the Red House Area, all with cabins, but these cabins are spread out over approximately 49 square miles. The extensive trail systems makes a stop to pick up a map at the beautiful stone administration building located on Red House Lake a must.

Summit trail system is my personal favorite for mountain biking. The Art Roscoe Ski Touring area is included in this series of trails, which have wonderful names such as Sweetwater, Snowsnake Run, and Christian Hollow.

From the parking area, you can warm up on the Stone Tower Loop, which is a rustic park road to a stone observation tower that looks out over the Allegheny River Valley below from a benchmarked elevation of 2202 feet above sea level.

Opposite the river, you can see Red House Lake and the



RED HOUSE: For those bikers yearning for the off-road biking experience, Red House offers the elusive "perfect ride." Just west of Salamanca, New York, Red House is a part of Allegheny State Park.

Photo by Lisa Borgia

administration building. After riding back to the parking area, you cross the road and enter the trail system proper.

Depending on your riding preferences, you can take Patterson Run, which is a thrill ride that runs 2.2 miles with a vertical drop of 400 feet, before joining Ridge Run; jump into the five winding miles of Snowsnake; or ease into the ride with the grassy, rolling loops of Sweetwater, Christian Hollow, and Leonard Run.

Anyway you choose, you are in for a treat. The trails are well kept, and just challenging enough without being too tough.

Insider's secrets to riding these trails: Make sure your bike is in good shape, never bike alone, and wear a helmet! Stay off Snowsnake if the going is wet. The ground on that trail contains a goodly amount of clay that becomes a sticky, gooey mess when soaked.

If you are not sure about your riding ability, or if this is your

first time off road, take the Sweetwater route. These trails are less than three miles long and all loop back to the main trail. They are gently rolling, have great vistas, and never take you far from your car. Those of you who are into riding hard and sweating, you can take Patterson first and climb back out Ridge Run to get rocking. Or turn onto Snowsnake, and pound it hard.

If you are taking along children, or want to stay on paved trails, the bike path around the lake is scenic and easy to ride. The trip around the lake is three miles, and the total mileage on the paved trail is just over five and half miles.

The administration building houses a small natural history museum for the kids, and a swimming beach is open during the summer season. There are many hiking trails with interpretive tours that include bear dens and beaver dams. Quaker Run has an even larger lake, with swimming and fishing areas.

To get to Red House from Erie, take Route 17 (Southern Tier Expressway) east for approximately 65 miles, and get off at exit 19 at Red House. This exit will take you directly into the park, and the administration building is located on the right about two miles from the highway. The ride is beautiful, crossing Chautauqua Lake at Bemus Point and following the Allegheny River Valley through New York.

Information on cabin rental, park hours, and fees can be obtained from the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Allegheny Region at (716) 354-9121; or for reservations, 1-800-456-CAMP.

Have fun biking, and remember bike safely!

Directions to Red House

From Erie: Take 190 east past Exit 10 to Rt.17.

Follow 17 for app. 65 miles into New York to exit 19 at Red House.

Follow this exit directly into the park.

On your right is the administration building about two miles from the highway.

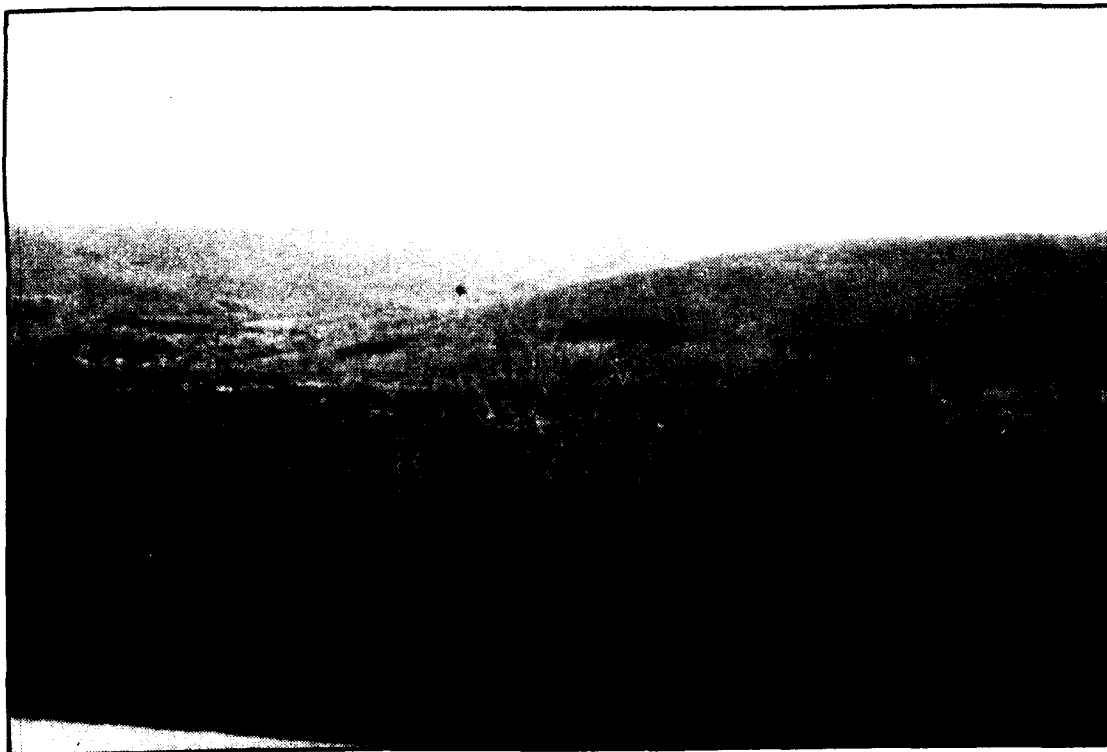


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SUMMIT TRAIL: A favorite of many, Summit Trail offers that perfect off-road biking with a view looking over the Allegheny River Valley from a benchmarked elevation of 2202 feet above sea level.