

Mad River Valley Tour
16.3 miles
(5.7 mile optional extension)



Terrain and Road Conditions:

The degree of difficulty you encounter will depend on whether or not you choose to include the optional section north and east of routes 17 and 100, as this contains the trip's most rugged terrain and consists entirely of unpaved surfaces.

The main route is more gentle and incorporates some paved surfaces. It begins with a good climb, however, and has one prolonged descent, so a degree of fitness is required.



Tour Highlights:

The landscape you will traverse on this tour is memorable and inspiring. Its focal point is the Mad River, which carves a course through a narrow valley between the Northfield and Green Mountain ranges in a series of inviting pools, riffles and gorges. Along the way it passes classic New England villages, pastoral farmlands, covered bridges, and some of Vermont's highest peaks.

The river's milling power and fertile floodplain were magnets for 18th and 19th century settlers.

Reminders of those bygone times abound in the architecture and landscape features of the valley.

The latter half of the 20th century has witnessed the valley's renaissance as a recreation and resort center, hosting several downhill and Nordic ski areas, a particularly scenic segment of the Long Trail, year round events and festivals, and a full complement of services, goods and accommodations.

The tour is designed to introduce the cyclist to the Mad River Valley in all of its drama and diversity. It will take you into historic Waitsfield and Warren villages; past art galleries and antique shops; up the valley walls past hillside farms, stone walls and panoramic overlooks; over dirt roads lined with stately sugar maples; and along the clear flowing waters of the Mad River.

Route Description:

➡ Park in the Village of Waitsfield where public parking can be found across from the library on Route 100. This scenic hamlet is listed on the national Register of Historic Places and boasts many fine, well-maintained 18th- and 19th-century structures. Greek Revival is the prominent architectural style. Waitsfield had its origins as a milling settlement, but quickly evolved into the main commercial center of the Mad River Valley.

➡ Turn east at the village's main intersection and proceed through The Great Eddy Covered Bridge over the Mad River. Also on the national Register, this span is the second oldest covered bridge in Vermont and the oldest in continuous operation. Built in 1833, its braces were actually hewn from tree crotches. Just below the bridge is a popular swimming hole.

➡ Climb out of the village and take your first left onto Common Road (0.4 mile).

➡ Climb rather steeply for another 1.2 miles on paved surfaces before reaching Waitsfield Common. If you don't choose to ride the Fayston option, you have just completed what is far and away the most difficult part of this loop. Here you will bear right onto Common Road and cruise along a high plateau for about 3 miles on a dirt surface, passing occasional farmsteads and panoramic vistas.

➡ At 4.4 miles bear left onto the paved surface of East Warren Road to continue the loop. You will soon encounter a roller coaster dip and rise and then continue on a plateau into the town of Warren.



➡ At 8.4 miles, just after you pass Airport Road, the pavement will bend sharply to the right and begin an exciting 2-mile descent along Freeman Brook into the village of Warren.

➡ When you reach the "T" intersection in the village, you will need to turn right to continue the loop, but first, make a left and see the rest of this picturesque hamlet. Warren Village is another national register site.

Although it had its beginnings as a mill village, all of its early mill and dam sites have been lost to floods and fires. However, over 70 historic structures remain in this tight cluster of residences, commercial buildings and churches. The covered bridge at the far end of the village dates to 1879 and was built by one man.

➡ Backtrack cross the Mad River and turn right onto Route 100 North.

➡ Continue north, paralleling the river until you reach the intersection of Routes 100 and 17. If you are tiring at this point, you may continue north on Route 100, through the settlement of Irasville. You will find a variety of shops and stores, and back to the village of Waitsfield (16.3 miles). If you're still pretty fresh and in the mood for some hills and incredible scenery, turn left onto Route 17.

➡ 1.02 miles from the intersection, take your first right onto Number Nine Road. Climb steeply, bearing right at an island of mailboxes. Soon you will reach the Bragg Hill Farm, c. 1843, providing spectacular views to the south and east.

➡ Bear right at the intersection of Stagecoach Road and Bragg Hill, then left onto Kew-Vasseur Road (3.0 miles).

➡ Here you will climb once again to another marvelous vantage point, descend into a small basin, climb again and descend to a "T" intersection (4.5 miles).

➡ Turn right here onto Center Fayston Road and descend swiftly for 2.6 miles to Route 100, taking time to admire the scenery. The last part of this descent is very steep so check your brakes at the top.

➡ Turn right onto Route 100 South and pedal 1.6 miles back to the Village of Waitsfield (loop total is 8.7 miles).

