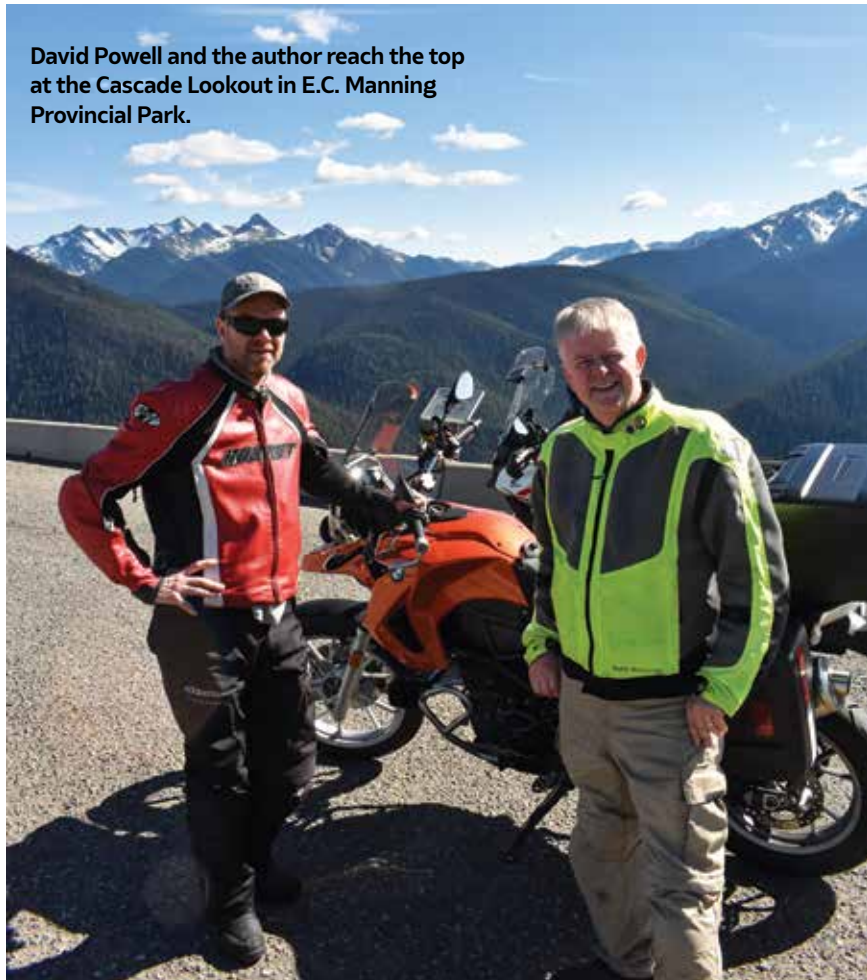


# The Breadbasket of British Columbia

A sweet ride in Okanagan Country.

Story and photos by Trevor Marc Hughes





**David Powell and the author reach the top at the Cascade Lookout in E.C. Manning Provincial Park.**

With many rides I have a sense of where I'm going but the details come out later. For this one I had a specific goal: I wanted to explore the roads my parents took me along as a kid in a Ford LTD, towing a tent trailer behind. We would always stop at fruit stands in the Okanagan region of British Columbia and pick up peaches, cherries, berries...whatever was in season. We'd nibble the fruit along the way or wait to eat it at a campsite. I wanted to visit these food-growing parts of my home province again and renew my connection with the roads and farms where the food I eat in Vancouver comes from.



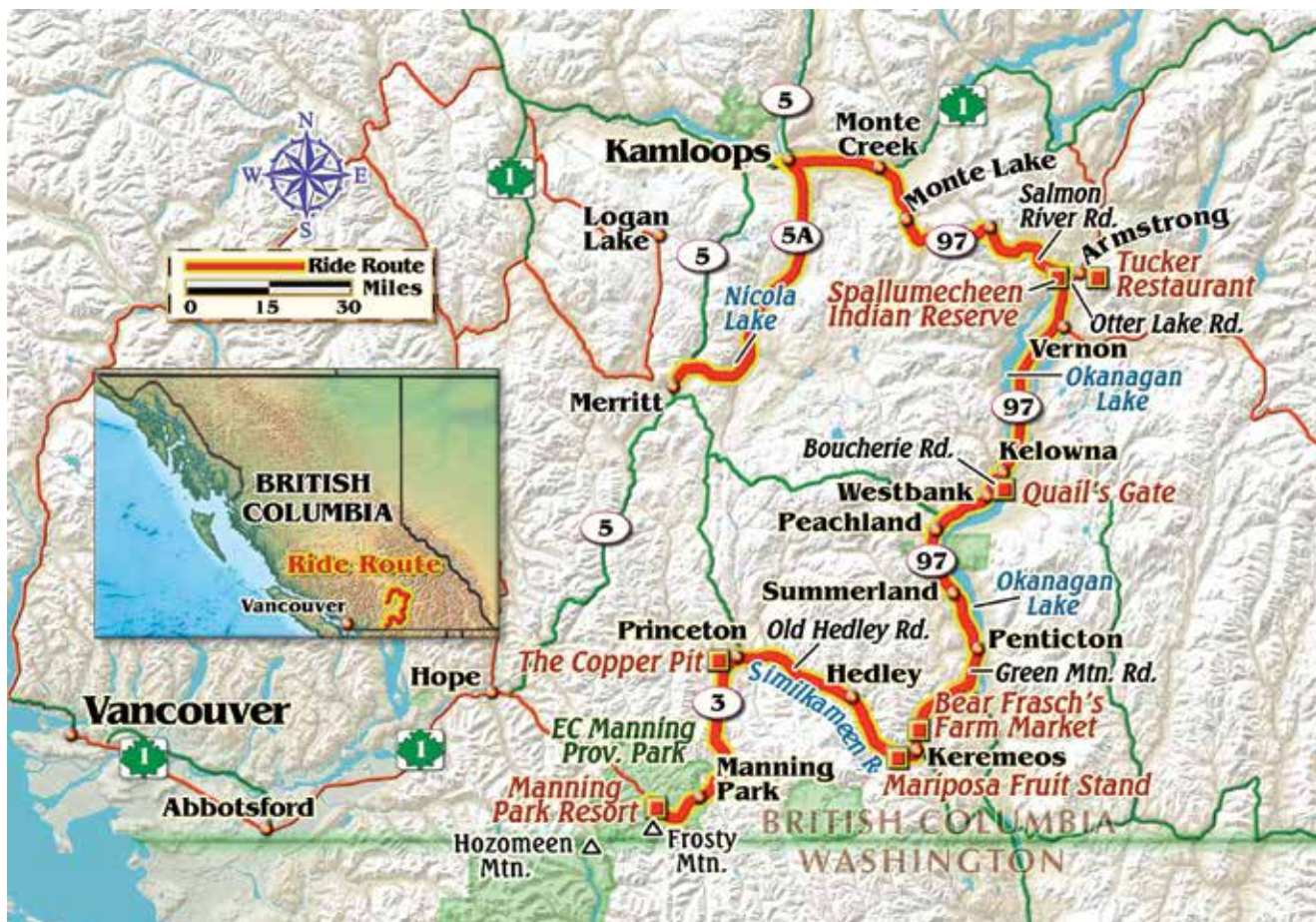


Left: Identifying peaks at the Cascade Lookout can be complicated; Manning Park lies below. Above: Getting a sense of the clientele...a Ferrari parked outside of Quail's Gate Winery.

Looking for a riding buddy, I gingerly pushed my BMW F 650 GS down a gear into third before taking the exit off Highway 3 into the parking area of Manning Park Resort, which sits among the colossal Cascade Mountains. My friend David Powell

had been exploring the roads of the Similkameen Valley, just east of E.C. Manning Provincial Park, on his Honda CB500X for a week, and I was keen to join him and find out what he'd learned. After a quick bite to eat, we were back on the road.

Before we made our way to Princeton, where we'd sleep that night, David was already suggesting a ride off the beaten track, up the switchbacks of the paved road to the Cascade Lookout. We crossed Highway 3 and proceeded to make a serious climb,



Map by BILL TIPTON (Compartmaps.com)





**Top:** Bear's, or Bear Frasc's Farm Market, holds a special place in my memory. This market north of Keremeos is where I would stop as a kid traveling with family to stock up on peaches and cherries. **Above, left:** The author and his 2010 BMW F 650 GS at the Mariposa Fruit Stand in Keremeos, B.C. **Above, right:** The first of the summer cherries on display at the Mariposa Fruit Stand.

the tree-lined edges of the road without a guardrail, before reaching what must have been a new record above sea level for my BMW. What lay before us was spectacular. Dominant in our view was Frosty Mountain, at nearly 8,000 feet. Just beyond was another peak of note on the other side of the 49th parallel. Hozomeen Mountain stands at just over 8,000 feet, among the North Cascades of Washington State. David and I were quietly mesmerized by the view. It was a great start to our three-day journey.

We wound our way along Highway 3, a.k.a. the Crowsnest Highway, a large open pit copper mine to our right declaring our arrival in Princeton. Over dinner at a restaurant suitably named The Copper Pit, I suggested a theme for our ride, one that would begin with some stops at the Okanagan

fruit stands I remembered well.

Next day we rode east out of Princeton on what would be one of many secondary roads we would travel, the Old Hedley Road. This windy path following the Similkameen River had us both flicking our bikes back and forth, enjoying the occasional view of morning sunlight reflecting on the water and getting into the rhythm of a road trip of several days. The occasional recreational site with a picnic table and fire pit made it tempting to stop and enjoy a night of camping by the river.

Joining briefly with Highway 3 again, we twisted the throttles to get to highway speeds, the surrounding hills increasingly covered with sagebrush as opposed to the lodgepole and ponderosa pine encountered farther west.





**Left:** A tractor with some history bakes in the sun near Bear Frasch's Farm Market, with the hills of the Similkameen Valley behind it. **Below:** David Powell checks the map after a brisk ride along the Westside Road rimming Okanagan Lake.

We rode past the town of Hedley, the steep slope above displaying the decaying wooden remnants of the famed Nickelplate gold mine, and would soon stop on the western outskirts of Keremeos, known for its many fruit stands in this community of orchards. One of the standout purveyors of fruit is the Mariposa Fruit Stand. With a big painted sign of a coyote in a hat lounging among a bunch of produce, it coaxed David and me to pull our bikes into the lot and have a look around the shop. It was June and that meant cherry season, judging from the boxes and boxes we saw prominently displayed at the entrance.

Back on the bikes, we soon stopped for lunch in the quirky historic town of Keremeos, also not surprisingly called the “fruit stand capital of Canada,” pulling in next to many other motorcycles. Many others cruised by at slow speeds. After picking up wrap sandwiches to go, we were back riding, countersteering left and onto Highway 3A for a brief stop at Bear Frasch's Farm Market. No camping trip into British Columbia when I was a kid was complete without a stop here. The August peaches hadn't arrived yet, but there were plenty of apples and more cherries to drool over. With a glance at the abandoned old tractors rusting away in a field, David and I were off to take a side road of his suggestion to Penticton: Green Mountain Road. After a left onto a road that clearly had some history behind it, we plunged into some twists and turns in a wooded area that had me smiling in my helmet. We banked the bikes to and fro and hardly saw a soul, except for another group of four motorcyclists coming the other way. David's

research had paid off. He's been suggesting I take this road for years, and we were finally riding it together. When we started to see the outskirts of Penticton, I wished we could go back and ride the road again, if it weren't for my low fuel reserves.

Soon we were riding alongside Okanagan Lake on Highway 97, traveling through the idyllic towns of Summerland and Peachland, soaking up the sun's rays. Riding alongside beaches on a hot day may be the one thing that makes me want to put the sidestand down, strip off my riding gear and go jump in a lake. But I resisted, and looked forward to the next scenic route, heading downhill to the lake. In order to not get caught up in the stifling traffic of Kelowna, David and I pulled off at Westbank onto Boucherie Road, angling our bikes toward a refreshing stop to cool us down.

It may not be a cool leap in a lake, but a stop to picnic in the shade by an Okanagan winery will do just fine.







**Above: The rows of vines at Quail's Gate Winery overlooking Okanagan Lake.**

The light glinted off Okanagan Lake in the distance as we nibbled on oranges, glancing out at the rows and rows of vines stretching down the hill to the water on the Quail's Gate Winery.

There's nothing more uncomfortable than sitting in traffic on a motorcycle on a hot day. So David told me of an alternative route he had found that not only avoided the Kelowna snarl, it also took on splendid views of Okanagan Lake (yes, it's a big lake) and many twists and turns. Lead on, David! Westside Road took us on an odyssey of curves while we stole glances at houseboats and jet-skiing lake users as we geared up, then geared down to take on curves and accelerate out of them, over and over again as we approached the end of lake country and entered dairy farm country. Passing through the Spallumcheen Indian Reserve we crossed Highway 97 to end up on St. Anne's Road just south of Armstrong, known for its cheddar and other milk-derived foods. David was getting warm so we stopped by a farm for a break, and listened to the tick-tick-tick of an industrial sprinkler spraying water over a burgeoning cornfield.

Soon we were riding Otter Lake Road south of Armstrong along the green pastures of dairy farms, cows watching these strange two-wheeled devices speed past them as they chewed their cuds. Tucker's Restaurant in the quaint town of Armstrong served us dinner before we rode winding Salmon River Road across one-lane, wood-planked bridges with the sun dipping down, dappling our helmets with light through the trees. We were brought to Highway 97 heading northwest, the setting sun in our eyes as we passed through historic towns like Falkland. Sprinklers in vast sunset-covered alfalfa fields threw huge arcs of spray, growing future hay for hungry milk-producing cows.

There was one more secondary road to take, Barnhartvale Road, just north of Monte Lake, which would take us through more farmland south of the Trans-Canada Highway. Rather than take the main highway, it made sense to ride a more scenic and windy passage to Kamloops. As we returned to the suburban sprawl of the city, I couldn't help but emit a groan and wished to return to the back roads David and I had traced all day, past farms, rows of grapes and fruit and vegetable stands pitching their wares.

David and I parted the next day. He was going to continue riding (lucky guy) and I was heading back home to Vancouver. But taking David's advice (why stop now?) I took Highway 5A, also known as the Old Kamloops Road, a much more charming and snaking passage south than the rapid, vapid Highway 5. This way I managed to pass by some lovely lakes, witness Sunday fishing parties cast lines from their boats and stop in at beautiful Nicola Lake near Merritt to observe a family with kids set out from a boat launch for a day out on the lake. It made me keen to return to my own family in Vancouver and tell them about where our milk, cheese, wine, fruits and vegetables come from and how lucky we are to live in such a diverse, plentiful and scenic part of the world. (47)

