Bison - Reagan - John Deere Loop

Beginning at the historic Oregon Depot built in 1913, this loop takes you through downtown Oregon, across the Rock River and south through the tiny village of Daysville, and the former estate of Governor Lowden. His lands have now been set aside as the 2,300 acre Lowden-Miller State Forest 1. It has 22 miles of maintained trails through the forest and along the river. Hiking, horseback riding, skiing and snowshoeing are popular activities.

Continuing on, you will ride past the 2,200 acre Nachusa Grasslands 2, one of largest restored grasslands in Illinois. This is a great place to stretch your legs, take a hike, or just enjoy the sweeping landscape. Fifteen hundred acres are set aside for a recently introduced genetically pure bison herd.

The loop continues through hilly farmland with attractive, well-kept farms and country estates until reaching the Rock River at the point it enters Dixon, the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan. A .5 mile paved trail takes you to the Dixon River Walk and downtown. There you can find much more about Reagan sites 3 as well as many restaurants and shops.

To return, retrace your ride until reaching Rte 2 north. A left onto White Oak then takes you beside limestone cliffs along the Rock River before entering low hills and farmland followed by woods. This returns back to Rte 2 just a short distance from the bridge into Grand Detour.

Here the river flows south, east, west, north, and south again within a few miles. It is also where John Deere 4 invented the modern plow which allowed cultivation on land covered by thick prairie grass. His home and blacksmith shop have been rebuilt as they may have appeared in 1837. They are open to the public for special events and daily tours. The Shell station is your best shot for a variety of refreshments.

Going north on Ridge Road returns you to wide rolling hills of fields and pastures. At the corner with Penn Corner Rd, you will find the small wooded Oak Ridge Cemetery, a nice spot to stretch your legs.

The final ride into Oregon is on Pines Rd.; a striped, moderately trafficked county highway with a few moderate hills. (An optional choice would add a few miles by continuing on Ridge Rd. and turning right onto Oregon Trail Road to enter Oregon.)
To see all of our routes, and to download Garmin turn by turn instructions, go to: www.bikeogle.org.

All riders need to be familiar with bicycle safety and rules of the road. Cyclists are encouraged to visit http://rideillinois.org/safety/adults/ for this information.