

## Selkirk International Loop offers awesome scenery

If one wants awesome natural beauty, combined with a physical challenge, then the place to cycle is the Selkirk International Loop ([www.selkirkloop.org](http://www.selkirkloop.org)). Depending on whether one chooses side trips or not, the distance varies from the basic 300-mile loop to a ride of more than 400 miles in northern Idaho/Washington and southern British Columbia.

We chose Sandpoint, Idaho, as our starting point in late September. We packed our touring gear with an eye towards being prepared for anything from 80 degrees to freezing; from blue skies to snow and rain. That meant in addition to rain gear, multiple layers, we also chose our heavier, all-weather cycling boots instead of our mesh, lighter road shoes.

On Day 1 we dealt with our first of numerous climbs of up to eight percent that continued for up to four miles at a time. I was glad that I had fortified myself with the special – a large Philly steak sandwich – at the Bear Creek Lodge & Restaurant in Bonners Ferry. By the time we arrived in Creston, British Columbia, 67 miles north, darkness was arriving.



We've learned to alternate glycogen-draining days with recovery rides. Day 2 was a recovery day. We cycled east on B.C. Highway 3 to Kitchener for lunch. On our way back, we checked out the fruit/vegetable farms in Erickson. Total distance – 27 miles.



Weather continued to be about perfect on Day 3 as we cycled 60 miles and reached Ainsworth, B.C., at nightfall. Near Boswell, B.C., we came across the unique Glass House, made from 500,000 used embalming fluid bottles. The ferry at Kootenay Bay has reduced times in the off-season. We made sure we made the 5:20 p.m. ferry. The next one was at 7

p.m., which would mean pedaling the last nine miles in the dark.

We scheduled a 30-mile ride for Day 4. We arrived in Nelson, B.C., a well-known center for artisans along B.C. Highway 6, early enough to enjoy the city. Nelson also is known for its outdoor activities and scenic vistas of the Selkirk Mountains.

People made Day 5 memorable. We reached Salmo, B.C., for lunch as menacing clouds lurked. During the downpour, I told the waitress I'd add one of their luscious brownies to my lunch tab if she would make the rain go away. I savored the "carbohydrates" and the sun returned. When we reached the border, the U.S. guard said, "Welcome home." That's nice. Darkness had set in when we concluded our 55-mile ride at the Circle Motel. There was only one restaurant open and it was three miles away in Metaline. The motel owner had a plan. She said we could call in an order, relax in our room and she'd drive to town to pick up our food. That's nice too.

When we returned to Sandpoint on Day 7, I figured we had pedaled 337 miles and I had burned an extra 17,000 calories that week! No, I didn't lose weight. But, I did enjoy eating my way around the picturesque loop.