



Ride the Tunnel in May

Check this iconic pedal route off your bucket list this spring.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DANIEL SHEPLER

A few miles northwest of Harbor Springs, M119 wanders a serpentine route along the Lake Michigan coastline. The road makes a climb just outside town to a bluff, and then continues north for 26 miles, laying out one of the Midwest's finest cycling routes. At times M119 offers views of the big lake, at other times it ducks into a thick canopy of trees, which has given the road its moniker, the Tunnel of Trees. From the road, surrounded by trees and countryside, you can hear the waves crash on the beach below as you ride.

May is an ideal time to get out and ride the Tunnel of Trees. Traffic is much lighter than summer and fall, the leaves are fully out, and the cool water of Lake Michigan keeps the temperatures from getting hot as you pedal. I met up with Bob McLain, owner of McLain Cycle & Fitness, early one morning to ride the Tunnel of Trees. We met in Harbor Springs and drove up M119, where he showed me the hot spots, best views, and places to stop to grab a coffee or snack along the way. After driving the twisty two-lane from start to finish, we pulled over and geared up to ride. Bob shared some of his insights and experience of the place, what gear to use, when the best times to ride are, local places to stop and eat afterwards, and the events that cyclists can participate in.

We spent a few hours pedaling along the coast and taking in the sun, the sounds, and the fresh air. Only a handful of cars passed us the entire morning, and the only other people we saw were occasional bikers. I was grateful for the warm weather and the outdoor exercise after the cool spring. The water and shoreline was stunning. It was difficult to keep pedaling and not stop at every lookout to soak in the beauty. We rode to the end of the Tunnel, turned around and pedaled back to the car. My legs were starting to feel the burn, even though there were no real hills to speak of along the route. At the end of the ride, I felt a fine sense of achievement as the benefits of the workout together with the fresh air, and the views of forest and shoreline left me in awe. **T**



GEAR TIP!

Spring weather can turn quickly, and ruin a ride if unprepared. Bob McLain, of McLain Cycle and Fitness, shared a couple of favorite layers to help riders stay comfortable and a pedal ahead of the weather. For the outer: a wind- and water-resistant, highly breathable jacket called the Deflect Jacket. On the inside: the Merino Tech Layer (base layer/long underwear) to wick away sweat while keeping your core warm. For feet: the Deflect H₂O Shoe Cover to keep your feet from getting wet and cold.

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