



## Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) Ride

### **Day 1: Pittsburgh to Ohiopyle (76 miles)**

This morning started early with a 4:30 a.m. wake up time so that we could do a final check on our bags, pick up fellow riders, and be at Point State Park by 6:15 a.m. Ed Quigley, our guide, was at the park waiting when we got there as was Tom Demagall, the owner of [Golden Triangle Bikes/GAP Outfitters](#) who worked with us so closely on planning this trip. Shortly after, we were joined by Damon Rhodes, the Board President of [Friends of the Riverfront](#). After quick radio interviews with [KDKA Radio](#) and [KQV Radio](#), we biked down to the fountain where John Rohe of the [Colcom Foundation](#), Scott Brumagin, DCNR Ranger Supervisor at [Point State Park](#), and [WPXI](#) awaited us. After a pep talk and history lesson from Ed, we got on our bikes at the Mile 150 marker and headed out on the trail.

The bike trail in the downtown area is pretty well known to Pittsburghers. We headed out of downtown on the Eliza Furnace Trail along Second Avenue until we reached the Hot Metal Bridge where we crossed over to the South Side. We passed along the trail in Hays where the [bald eagles](#) live and to the [Waterfront](#) in Homestead. There, at the [Eat'n Park Waterfront](#), we stopped for a quick half hour to grab some breakfast, thanks to Jeff Broadhurst and Dan Wilson of the [Eat'n Park Hospitality Group](#) who met us along with Trina DeMarco and Becky McArdle. Mayor Betty Esper of [Homestead Borough](#) and Mayor John Dindak of [West Homestead Borough](#) came out to greet us as well, and we were also joined by a half dozen members of the [Steel Valley Trail Council](#) (STVC). Ryan Deto of the [Pittsburgh City Paper](#) also joined us in Homestead. After refueling, we got back on the trail – with the STVC members and Ryan Deto – and began the leg to McKeesport.

Along the way, Ed pointed out the [Labyrinth](#) and the [Pumphouse](#), both near Mile 139, before we headed through [Duquesne](#). We cycled past the [Edgar Thomson Works](#) and [Kennywood Park](#) before coming to the Riverton Bridge, which connects Duquesne and [McKeesport](#). We passed through the [McKeesport Marina](#) and stopped at the [McKeesport Palisades](#) around 9:20 a.m. where [State Senator Jim Brewster](#), [McKeesport Mayor Mike Cherepko](#), and [McKeesport Trail Commission](#) President Linda Brewster and Secretary Joyce MacGregor were on hand to greet us.

The [McKeesport Trail Commission](#) (MTC) operates the McKeesport Hostel, which Linda and Joyce showed to the group this morning. The hostel is a four-bed (two bunk beds) short-stay facility for bicyclists or hikers traveling on the Great Allegheny Passage. It is located on the GAP along Water Street/Bendel Way in Richard J. Gergely Riverfront Park, near McKee's Point Marina.

A brief 10 minutes later, we headed back out on the trail. We passed through [Dead Man's Hollow](#) and then rode past closed mills, trailhead parking and play fields in Boston. A few miles after that, Ed pointed out [Dravo Cemetery](#) which is the only remnant of a Methodist Church which burnt down. It's the final resting place for settlers, Civil War veterans and a War of 1812 veteran. Shortly after, we

passed a large red waterfall (from acid mine drainage) and biked through Buena Vista before arriving at West Newton around 11:50 a.m.

The West Newton Station, a replica of a former 1910 P & LE train station, has been turned into a Welcome Center and shop featuring GAP merchandise. Leslie Pierce met us there and showed us around the station, which also houses a collection of signs from hiking and biking trails from across the U.S., before we headed over to [Trailside Restaurant](#) for some lunch.

At 1:20 p.m., we were back on the trail and on our way to Connellsville, a 26-mile stretch. We passed through Buddtown, which still has concrete silos, black rock refuse and other remnants of the coal mine there. Next was [Cedar Creek Park](#), which belongs to Westmoreland County. It has river access, picnic pavilions, restrooms, camping sites and a primitive campground. At Mile 106 is a railroad station and houses from a former coal mining company town, Van Meter. It's the site of the [worst mining disaster](#) in Pennsylvania history. A few miles later we passed through [Whitsett](#), which is on the National Historic Register of Historic Places as a typical coal patch company town. You can still see the remains of a mine and silos and foundations of the former complex.

We traveled past Layton and Perryopolis, which includes a restored [grist mill](#) that had originally been established by George Washington, past the remains of [beehive ovens](#), then through Dawson and across the Youghiogheny River. In Adelaide, the town named for [Henry Clay Frick's wife](#), you could see several batteries of coke ovens and the remains of the [Old Overholt Distillery](#) across the river. By 4:15 p.m., we had made it to Connellsville. The conditions on the trail couldn't be better – we had nothing but sun, and so stopped off in Connellsville for some frozen treats at [New Haven Trailside Treats](#).

By 5 p.m., we were back on the trail and ready to face the last 16 miles of today's ride. We stopped by a beautiful scenic overlook near Mile 78 and just enjoyed the scenery and view from the GAP between Connellsville and Ohiopyle. We arrived at [Ohiopyle](#) at 7 p.m., a little ahead of what we had planned as we had made good time on the trail all day. We were greeted by Ken Bisbee, the Park Manager, who talked with us about our ride and Ohiopyle. The DCNR state parks were our bookends on today's trip – with our start at Point State Park and our ending place of Ohiopyle. At an event in Point State Park yesterday, DCNR [Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn](#) mentioned that there are over 200,000 acres of [state parks](#) in Pennsylvania. We are fortunate to have such great resources in our Commonwealth.

We're heading to get checked in to our lodging for the evening and take showers before grabbing something for dinner at the [Falls City Pub](#). I have no doubt that we'll all sleep well tonight, and we'll be on our way back on the trail tomorrow morning before 9 a.m. While Damon is heading back to Pittsburgh, [Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker](#) is meeting us tomorrow morning and biking the next leg with the group. We'll be biking 56 miles to Frostburg, Maryland.

Before I sign off for the evening, a quick note:

Without the [TrailGuide](#), these types of trips are not possible. The guide provides mile by mile details along with sample itineraries, maps of the towns along the GAP and the [C&O Canal](#). Published by the Great Allegheny Press, all proceeds are plowed back into our trail system. Thank you to the Allegheny Trail Alliance for the amazing work done over these 30+ years! Without the trail groups and the owners of the trail – the GAP would not be possible.

Good night from Ohiopyle