

Recommended Driving Tour#1

THE SUN MOUNTAIN-BONAPARTE LAKE-PALMER LAKE LOOP

Okanogan is the third largest county in the United States in terms of land area and yet the fourth smallest in Washington State in terms of both population density and per capita income. Once home to several highly diversified agricultural and extraction based industries (cattle ranching, orchards, logging, mining, etc.) the eastern portion of the county has suffered a dramatic economic decline over the last 25 years resulting in the loss of much of its rural population. As a result, many of the roads that once served the counties far-flung communities now provide scenic by-ways that are ideal for driving tours. Excellent services are available in the towns of Omak, Okanogan, Tonasket and Oroville and the Visitor Information Centers in each town provide useful information and clean restrooms. Gold Digger Cellars in Oroville also provides a nice stop to taste locally produced wines (try the Chardonnay).

1. From Sun Mountain drive to US Route 20 (the North Cascades Highway) and make a right turn heading east through Twisp. Two miles east of Twisp stay on Route 20 as it makes a left turn to climb over Loup-Loup pass. Descend through the "Seven Devils" into the Omak/Okanogan area where Route 20 makes a right turn and takes you out to US Route 97. Turn left and head north on Routes 97 & 20 to Tonasket.
2. In downtown Tonasket continue following Route 20 as it makes a right turn (east) and climb the narrow Bonaparte River valley until you eventually enter more open country where you will note the storied Aeneas River Valley on your right. Five miles before Wauconda make a left turn onto the well-marked Bonaparte Lake Road (NF 3240).
3. Drive north on shaded asphalt past Bonaparte Lake (there is a store at the resort that is sometimes open) and continue through heavily wooded terrain until making a long descent (watch for pot holes) to Beaver Lake and an intersection with the Torado-Chesaw Road (County Road 9480). Turn left and drive past Beth Lake to begin a long uphill climb to Pontiac Ridge.
4. Breaking out onto a beautiful plateau you will drive through open country to an intersection with the Chesaw-Oroville Road (#9480) and the tiny town of Chesaw. Stop at the store, buy candy bars, juice, chat, hang-out with the locals and when you're ready, get back in your car to make the four mile climb to the crest of Havillah Road. A long, winding downhill ride on the Chesaw-Oroville road will bring you into the downtown area via Central Avenue.
5. In Oroville make a left turn onto Main Street and then an immediate right turn onto the Loomis-Oroville Road. Climb a steep short hill past the golf course and then continue climbing along the Similkameen River through a beautiful, open valley until eventually reaching the crest just west of Nighthawk. Stay on the Loomis-Oroville Road, bearing south toward Palmer Lake and enjoy a mostly flat ride along the scenic east shore. More rolling country eventually brings you to a left turn at the small hamlet of Loomis.
6. Staying on the Loomis-Oroville Road (heading east) climb past Spectacle Lake and several smaller lakes through open ranching country until eventually reaching the crest and beginning a winding downhill to an intersection with Route 7 (Janis-Oroville Westside Road). Turn right here and head towards Tonasket, eventually passing the graveyard (on your left) and making a final left hand turn onto 4th Street and, after crossing the bridge, a right hand turn onto South Whitcombe Avenue.
7. Reverse the route described in #1 above in order to get back to Sun Mountain Lodge.

Recommended Dining and Vintners

Dining Options:

- **Trino's Mexican Restaurant** (509) 476 9151
1918 Main Street
Plentiful and inexpensive traditional Mexican food. The owners are great folks.
- **Eden Valley Guest Ranch** (509) 485 4002
Pat & Robin Stice
info@edenvalleyranch.net
(Note: The Eden Valley Guest Ranch is located in the hills east of Oroville, very western in ambiance, and includes a large enclosed social gathering/dining area big enough for your group. The folks who run it (Pat & Robin Stice) are very nice and I'm sure they would be willing to cater a meal for you. There is, however, two miles (+/-) of gravel road between the main road and their house.)

Tasting Rooms in the Oroville area:

- **Okanogan Estate & Vineyards** (509) 476 2736
www.okanoganwine.com
- **Lake Crest Winery** (509) 476 2259
www.lakecrestwinery.com
- **Copper Mountain Vineyards** (509) 476 2762
- **Esther Bricques Winery** (509) 476 2861
www.estherbricques.com