

CYCLING THE NORTH COAST

written & photographed by
Dave Schlabowske

I may never go to Colorado again. After a whirlwind weekend tour of Wisconsin's North Coast along Lake Superior, I found some of the best mountain biking I have experienced since I last rode in Durango. While the trails don't have quite the same mountainous vistas, the views of Lake Superior from the top of Mt. Ashwabay are just as spectacular, and oxygen is a lot easier to find at 1,280 feet than it is at 12,800 feet riding over Engineer Pass.



I first visited Bayfield last February, when Julian Kegel (Wheel and Sprocket), Nick Ginster (Fyxation) and I made the trip north to ride the ice road to Madeline Island and explore the frozen sea caves on our fat bikes. That trip was so much fun, my family and I took a three day weekend in Bayfield in July to paddle the same places I rode on my Schlick Northpaw. It was an amazing experience to see the very same caves in polar opposite seasons!

During the family trip, I was invited by the folks from the North Coast Cycling Association (NCCA) and Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) to ride the local trails at Mt. Ashwabay with State Representative Janet Bewely from Ashland. I was so blown away by the quality of the flowy, fun mountain bike trails, that I made a promise to myself to come back and ride them again when I had time to take photos for this story.

Julian couldn't make out most recent trip back over Labor Day weekend, but Nick and I spent some serious time ripping Torogdor, Upper Diesel and the other trails at Mt. Ashwabay with John Murphy from the NCCA. There are currently just over five miles of really challenging, fun trails to ride, but plans are underway for 25 to 30 miles of trail. Construction moves relatively quickly because the northern CAMBA crew roughs them in with the mini-excavator they purchased, and then they finish trails by hand.

Every time I head to Lake Superior I make a mandatory stop to fill a growler or two and eat some amazing deep dish pizza at Thirsty Pagan Brewing in Superior. The micro brews there are some of my favorite because they always have an interesting sour on tap. This last trip it was a tasty Berliner Weiss.

You can't find a better pairing for microbrews than bicycling, so as you would expect, Thirsty Pagan owner Steve Knaus is bike guy and a big supporter of Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS). COGGS was started in 1994 when the Superior Bikers and the North Star Bike Club combined.



this page top: Tricycles became popular machines for women because they allowed riders to wear skirts. This tricycle-built-for-two, ca. 1885, included steering and pedaling mechanisms for the front and rear riders. **below:** A young Franz Theodor "Terry" Andrae, ca. 1883, before his days as a high-wheel racer and bicycle industrialist. **opposite page:**



RATED **#1** ON
MTBR.COM FOR
OUR BIKE RACKS
AND TRAINER.

ORDER ONLINE AT
1UpUSA.com



MADE WITH PRIDE IN THE USA



look south of the Cheddar Curtain for the SRAM X9 drivetrain, but otherwise the entire build is from the Badger State bicycle industry!

Nick and I looked at the map and it looked like sand as far as the eye could see on the Wisconsin side of the Superior Entry on Wisconsin Point by Allouez Bay. To get there you take Highway 53 east to Moccasin Mike Road (seriously) and out to Wisconsin Point, where there are a bunch of places to park by trails that lead you to the beach, which is part of the largest freshwater sand bar in the world.

After refueling with Steve at Thirsty Pagan Brewing, Nick and I only had time to ride about five miles of beach when we had to turn around so we could get back to Bayfield. With so much more sand to explore, we plan to bring our Fyxation fatties back to ride more sand. The beach had so much driftwood that it offers some really fun technical opportunities, which is unusual for beach riding.

Back in Bayfield, Nick and I hopped on the ferry with our touring bikes to ride around Madeline Island. With very few cars, lots of smooth, flat asphalt and bike lanes, Madeline Island offers a wonderful opportunity for an easy ride through gorgeous scenery. Nick brought his four-piece fly rod and we took a break along the beautiful shoreline to toss some flies in Big Bay State Park. He didn't have any luck pulling in a shore lunch, but we snacked on blueberries, which were plentiful pretty much anywhere you looked down.

Since then, the nonprofit organization has built 35 miles of killer mountain bike trails in the granite hills that tower over the Twin Ports of Duluth and Superior. The trails are part of the Duluth Traverse system, which includes a plan to build 100 miles of mountain bike trails right in town! There are even lift-served trails at Spirit Mountain.

During my repeated visits to Superior this year, I have been curious about the opportunities for beach riding but didn't have the time to investigate the shoreline until this recent trip with Nick. Since we knew before we left that we would be look-

ing for sand, we brought two of Fyxation's prototype carbon fat bikes as test vehicles. My rocket on two wheels tipped the scales at 26.5 lbs and was built up with as many quality components from Wisconsin companies as possible. I started with Answer carbon bars and seatpost, Hayes Prime brakes, and Sun-Ringle Mulefut 80SL rims laced to Fyxation hubs with WheelSmith spokes. For sneakers, I got a pair of the new Bontrager Hodag tubeless tires. Add Fyxation grips, bar-end plugs, pedals and a red Selle-Anatomica saddle made in Elkhorn, and you have the Cheddar Build! I did have to



Plug into the evolution of bicycle safety

with the new Superflash USB & Superflash Micro USB.



25% of profits to bicycle advocacy
Better Bicycle Products for a Better World



BIKE THE CAMBA CLUSTER AT MT. ASHWABAY,
2 MILES SOUTH OF BAYFIELD

In town we found our whitefish at the Bayfield Inn Lakeside Restaurant, right across the street from the Isaac Wing House where we were staying. I can't say enough good things about the Isaac Wing House. Our two-room suite had a huge bathroom with whirlpool and two porches, one overlooking the bay and the other more private and surrounded by wildflowers. It will definitely be the first place I try to reserve the next time I head back to Bayfield.

While I might still visit my friends in Durango, I honestly have to admit that I can't wait to get back to Bayfield. The tiny town of 457 sits on the edge of one of the most beautiful natural areas in the world, the Apostle Island National Park, so it is the perfect home base for a silent sports adventure. With quick access to great mtb trails, unparalleled sea kayaking, and scenic paved roads. Throw in great food (you have to try the whitefish livers), a good coffee shop, a bike shop, and you have the making of a perfect Wisconsin vacation. 🍷



You can now get fat-bike trays for the easy to use Saris Freedom 2 rack! I love this rack because it is so light and adjusts without tools to fit virtually any bike. And don't forget it is made right here in Wisconsin! Nick and I used the Freedom 2, but there is a Freedom 4 as well.

BAYFIELD

and the apostle islands



Request a FREE Visitor Guide

BAYFIELD.ORG • 715.779.3335