

DULUTH MUST RIDE EXPERIENCES

Recently the City of Duluth was designated as a Gold Level IMBA Ride Center and one big reason for that designation was the wide and varied types of trail riding, its high quality design and construction and its quantity. With that in mind here are just a few easy to access, easy to ride options for the visitors and locals alike.

There are a few things to keep in mind as you consider a ride in Duluth.

First, please keep up to date on conditions. The majority of our riding is on clay soils. Clay is awesome. The French open still uses Clay as a surface for Tennis because when dry its hard, its fast and its extremely grippy. In Duluth in good conditions riders can take corners quickly and aggressively.

When Clay is wet however it's the worst surface in the world to ride and its also easy to damage.

In skiing and snowboarding you have powder days, in surfing you have overheads, in fishing it's the hatch, but in Duluth riding its dry trails, or trails just getting dry and tacky. When you come to town to ride, wait for the best conditions and celebrate them when you get them.

Please check [The COGGS](#) website before every ride and see if the trail your interested in riding is open. If the trails are wet, please do us all a favor and stay off the trails.

Secondly, you don't become an IMBA Gold Level Ride Center easily.

COGGS and its community partners have been building for this level of recognition for nearly a decade. Along the way there have been a myriad of local businesses that have been big partners in making this happen. In the ride descriptions below I name some convenient places to eat while on the rides. However there are a LOT more place in town that I did not name as this is about the rides, not Duluth in general. Please check [Visit Duluth](#) for more information on some of the great food, beverage and hotel options in the City.

However I do want to recognize a few big partners that are food related. If you can eat at these places, spend your money and your time there that would be a huge thanks to them for their support. In fact thank them while your there, drop em an email or tell your server that your riders.

First Fitgers and their suite of eateries needs to be mentioned. [The Brewhouse](#), [Tycoons Ale House](#), [Endion Station](#) and [The Burrito Union](#). The crew at Fitgers has always been a supporter of Outdoor Recreation and did some of COGGS first beer related Duluth Traverse Fundraisers.

Another big supporter has been [The Northern Waters Smokehaus](#). The owner of this place owns a Santa Cruz and a healthy amount of his employees are rippers as well. Best lunch in town no question.

[The Duluth Coffee Company](#) is another big hitter that needs some love while your in town. Duluth Coffee delivers by bike, the owner and some of the employees are old BMX shredders and still step out onto the dirt from time to time to show us all how its done. The first DH style gravity jerseys in town featured Duluth Coffee as its biggest Logo.

While most people think of all the hub-bub around mountain biking as being Duluth specific, Superior Wisconsin has had a role in it as well. Especially when you realize that the [Thirsty Pagan Brewery](#) has been there literally from the start supporting COGGS and its quest in creating the Duluth Traverse. Steve Knauss was the first Brewery in the area to truly step up financially and support COGGS and mountain biking in the twin ports will forever be in his debt. On top of that the guy rides like a nutter and shreds like a freak, so you had better make it a drive across the bridge and eat his pizza and drink his beer.

The Duluth Traverse

When you come to Duluth or do your research in order to play your visit you will see a lot of press on the [Duluth Traverse](#). This is a quick FAQ. The "DT" is a single trail. It's a green trail and its audacious goal is to exist the length of the City, 45 miles point to point. At the time of this writing, the DT only exists in segments, most of them associated with

Duluth's major riding spots. Eventually all these sections will be linked, hopefully in the next 3-4 years and at the rate we are building and one big draw will be riding across the City from point A to Point B on 50 miles of purpose build single track. Right now though the trail is in bits and pieces, but its important to realize the work going on the potential ride that will exist in the near future for your next visit.

The “Shore to Sky” Ride.

Trailhead: Lester Amity. [MTB Project Link](#).

General Ride Description: The Shore to Sky ride takes you from the level of Lake Superior to one of the highest points above the City of Duluth and Lake Superior, Hawks Ridge.

There are several variations of this ride but the most straight forward is as follows.

Starting at the Lester Amity Trail head, ride up The West Amity Trail to The Hawks Ridge Trail. Ascending the Hawks Ridge Trail you will access a sweeping view of Lake Superior and the east side of the City of Duluth. Currently the Hawks Ridge Trail is an out and back.

Upon your return choose the Duluth Traverse Trail as your descent option. This trail will complete your loop back to the trailhead. The Duluth Traverse descent is flowy green level trail with amazing views of the various waterfalls of the Lester River.

Food: There are several great options for food in doing the “Shore to Sky”.

Breakfast and coffee is awesome at the [Amity Coffee House](#). Not only does Amity have great stuff to eat and drink it is owned by one of the biggest trail users in the City, Dr. Adam Swank and his wife Patti. Breakfast Lunch and Dinner are also available at the [New London Café](#). Later in the day grabbing a bite at [Sammy's Pizza](#) in Lakeside is also a good choice.

Beers: Currently getting good beers on the East side of the City is a complicated thing due to the Lakeside neighborhood being a dry neighborhood.

However, recently the [Lester Park Golf Course](#) has been allowed to serve alcohol. Otherwise head to nearby downtown to enjoy all sorts of craft beer options.

Bike Shops:

The best bike care access for Lester Park is either at [The Ski Hut](#) or [Continental Ski and Bike](#). It should also be noted that both of these shops have been huge supporters of off road cycling in Duluth as have many of their brands.

The “Rift Ride”.

Trailhead: 40th Ave West, hikers and bikers lot. [MTB Project Link](#)
General Ride Description:

This ride gets you up close and personal with the Geology of the “Duluth Complex”.

While the east and west sides of Duluth tend to be clay soils with occasional rock, the central part of the City is composed mainly of Gabbro (a type of rock within the Duluth Complex) with some clay soils mixed in.

While the off road cycling in this zone is considered more technical, this ride highlights the more entry level of the possible trail routes that exist there.

By parking at 40th Ave West Trailhead riders are located directly between Piedmont Park to the east and Brewers Park to the west.

By riding up 40th Ave hill and accessing the Lollygagger section of the Duluth Traverse the rider will ascend the Continental Rift, which towers above the city of Duluth.

Lollygagger is a trail full of smooth berms and rollers that twists and turns its way around the backside of the Brewers Park Ridge line. Once it claims its high point it generally contours until it runs into The [Homebrew Trail](#).

While Homebrew is rated as an advanced black Diamond trail it should be noted that its main “A” line tread is more akin to blue trail riding and many of the advanced features that make it a black trail are off of the side of the trail and are considered “B” Line choices. This type of trail creatively utilizes the Gabbro rock ledges of the Duluth Complex for fun drops, jumps and rollovers, while also allowing the less advanced riders a choice of challenge. Mix this in with berms and stunning views of the St. Louis River Valley to the West and Lake Superior to the East and you have a rocky, technical experience for a variety of rider abilities.

There are many variations on the Rift Ride, however most are advanced.

First there is the [Kissing Booth](#) Variation. This extends the Lollygagger/Homebrew loop by adding in a directional descent and ascent trail called The Kissing Booth. This is an advanced and technical downhill descent and a challenging climb back up to Homebrew. For those folks that relish a truly tough single track challenge this is a must ride in Duluth.

More advanced riders looking for a longer ride can access the Piedmont Trail system to create a much longer more technical loop in addition to the Homebrew, Lollygagger loop.

Parking Note: The parking lot at 40th Ave is very small. If you're an advanced rider consider parking at the bottom of the Kissing Booth on Skyline Road and starting there. It's a great way to start the ride and an even better way to finish!

Food: Brewer and Piedmont Parks are very central to Duluth's food and beer attractions. However in the immediate vicinity of Brewers Park is

the famed [Duluth Grill](#) is perfect for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The owners of the Duluth grill have done an amazing job focusing on fresh food, organic food and local food in the area and they are in turn also supportive of the Cities trails of all kinds.

For a quick caffeine hit and some light fare, [Beaner's Central Coffeehouse](#) is a killer Coffee Shop on Central Ave. Jason Wussow the owner of Beaners is not only a great musician, he is a shredding skier in the winter and has been a backer of recreation in the city as well.

Beer: There is no shortage of options for good brews near Brewers Park. The closest and perhaps most coveted brew stop for MTB locals is [Bent Paddle Tap Room](#). Bent Paddle has been a huge supporter of mountain biking in the City as well as all outdoor recreation. They even brewed a COGGS specific beer called Lollygagger, yes the same as the trail!

Also near Brewers Park is Duluth's oldest craft brew beer and that is [Lake Superior Brewing Company](#).

Bike Shops: The Ski Hut has a West Duluth location that is very easy to access from Brewer Park. [Twin Ports Cyclery](#) is another bike shop option on the near West side.

“The Rock and Roll Experience”

Trailhead: Lower Chalet, [Spirit Mountain Recreation Area](#). [MTB Project Link](#)

General Ride Description: Lets face it. Some folks like to flow with gravity and some folks like to fight it. Spirit Mountain is the place to flow with it.

Spirit Mountain is Duluth's lift served gravity center. This is the place where you lower the seat as far as it will go. Loosen up your pedals, borrow a full faced helmet and concentrate on going down hill as the speed that feels the most comfortable. For novice riders Happy Camper and Candyland are your best bets. No mandatory air, minimal rock

gardens and wide treads make these trails a fast fun descent with an extremely high return on “Wee Factor”.

For advanced riders, Wild Cat and Smorgasbord are some great choices. Drops, rocks big high-speed berms and doubles and table tops galore. Stepping it up a notch are the trails called Calculated Risk, a true DH run with major rock gardens and rock drops and faces and also Boss Hog a big hit jump line.

Food: The Riverside Bar and Grill is located in the Grand Ave Chalet at the base of Spirit Mountain. Good food, good brews!

Beers: The Riverside serves a variety of local craft beers.

Bike Shops: Continental Ski and Bike has a mobile bike shop and mechanic on the hill during operating hours.

For bigger problems the best bike care access is either at [The Ski Hut West](#) or [Continental Ski and Bike](#).

“The Kitchigumizibi Ride”

Trailhead: Chambers Grove Park, Fond Du Lac neighborhood.

[MTB Project Link.](#)

General Ride Description:

The word Kitchigumizibi means “Lake Superior River” in Ojibwa and its fitting for this wonderful off road riding experience as it takes place above the St. Louis River on the Cities far western boundary.

Best way to start is to climb the Cathedral trail to its ridge line contour and then stick with its flowly goodness until it becomes Upper Cathedral. These two trails compose the western end of the Duluth Traverse which is generally designed to be a green level trail for its length.

Eventually the rider will hit the Porcupine Passage trail and make a right. This trail rolls and winds its way all the way down to the Old Mission Creek Road. In making a left on the road the rider will be on a mile or so of two track that has a wild backcountry feel to it. There are several creek crossings and some interesting views of old bridges from the roads hey day in the early 1900's. Eventually the road intersects with the Valley West Trail and by making a left on it you will climb and return eventually to the Upper Cathedral Trail. At this point riders can either return via the Cathedral trails or if they are open for more riding and can handle a blue level trail they can complete a full system loop by descending Loki, a barnburner of a trail with many articulated and banked bridges (not jumps or drops) that eventually brings the rider back to Cathedral and eventually the Chambers Grove Parking lot.

This ride is butter smooth, nearly no rocks. Has lots of gradual climbing with very few steep ups or downs. The trails wind you through many hardwood stands and also gives the riders views of the Mission Creek Valley.

Food: The west side of Duluth is not known for its food options but there are several great places to eat as you head to or from Mission Creek. First is [The Iron Mug in Morgan Park](#). This is a cool place that has decent coffee and a caramel rolls in the mornings and is also good for a quick sandwich at lunch time. [The Lotus](#) is a west Duluth cult favorite. Stop in there after your ride for Vietnamese coffee and a steaming bowl of Pho. For the those that love a good dive bar, the [Wabegon](#) is also located near Chambers Grove and is good for a burger and since its technically in Wisconsin, you can also grab beers to go, even on a Sunday.

Beers: The Wabegon is the closest watering hole with decent (and un-decent beer). Depending on if its open the Mont Du Lac Bar is also a great options but check for hours before you go. Another great option is the Buffalo House off of Becks Road and near highway 35.