

WILD ELK GRAVEL PENNSYLVANIA



**RIDE DEEP INTO THE
PENNSYLVANIA WILDS —**
where gravel roads wind
through the elk range, vast
forests, and quiet mountains.



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Discover CAMERON COUNTY

Cameron County is a wild and wonderful outdoor paradise. Visitors can unplug from their busy lives and connect with nature in the quiet mountains and under star-filled dark skies. The cold mountain waters provide some of the best fly-fishing in Pennsylvania. Summer brings cyclists to ride the new Wild Elk Gravel network. During autumn, visitors can experience the elk rut and winter finds snowmobilers riding the many trails in the county.



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WILD ELK GRAVEL IN CAMERON COUNTY, PA



Welcome to the only gravel destination in the East where **1,500+ wild elk roam free** across vast public lands—an experience so rare and electric that simply pedaling through this landscape feels like riding inside a living wildlife documentary. Centered in Cameron County at the heart of the PA Wilds, this route network spills into Potter, Clinton, Clearfield, and Elk Counties and threads through Elk, Susquehannock, and Moshannon State Forests. This is a place of **silent ridgelines, steep forested valleys, endless gravel,** and the ever-present possibility that you'll round a corner and come **face-to-face with a 700-pound bull elk.**

Cyclists travel here not just for the remoteness, the scenery, or the adventure—but for the **thrill of sharing the road with the largest wild elk herd in the Northeast,** a phenomenon utterly unique to this region. Small communities dot the landscape, but most miles feel deeply wild and immersive, with **wildlife encounters far more common than cars.**



**WILD
ADVENTURE
STARTS HERE**



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WHEN TO VISIT

The best months to ride are **April-October**, though spring and fall can still have chilly temperatures overnight and even the potential for snow. Trees are typically leafed out by mid-May and fall colors peak in early October. **Elk rut season lasts from late September through mid-October**, and is the best chance for seeing the majestic creatures. **Hunting seasons** throughout the fall months may result in increased traffic in the forest, and it's a good idea to wear blaze orange for safety, especially during deer rifle season (begins the Saturday after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks).

RECOMMENDED BIKES & GEAR



Bikes: Drop-bar gravel bike or hardtail MTB with fast-rolling tires

Tires: 38–48 mm with moderate tread (some rougher stretches and rocky forest roads)

Gearing: Low gearing strongly recommended

1. Minimum: 1:1 for day rides
2. Ideal for bikepacking: 1:1.5 (e.g., 36 × 10–52)



Brakes: Strong, fresh pads—carry spares. Disc brakes perform best on long descents and in wet conditions.

Carry capacity: Food for 50+ miles, 2–3 liters of water (more in heat).

Tools/spares: Bring full repair capability—no bike shops in Emporium or along routes. Carry unique parts (pads, derailleur hanger, proprietary bits).

SAFETY & CONDITIONS

While the vast majority of the route network utilizes **low-volume forest and country roads** where cars will be few and far between, and all the routes have been optimized to utilize busy roads as little as possible, there are a few sections that are necessary to connect to and from towns or between sections of gravel. Any road with painted lines will tend to be busier, and use caution especially during rush hour. Stay alert on fast descents and watch out for wildlife such as deer, especially around dawn and dusk. Road surfaces vary and can change quickly – steeper sections tend to get washboarded especially on the inside of turns. Make sure your brakes are maintained well.

Some of the roads in the region are also **open to ATVs** from May through September – these will be indicated with signage. Cyclists may also encounter **horses**. Best practice and courtesy is to stop your bike and let the equestrian pass as some horses may be spooked by fast-moving bicycles.

Cell service is very limited in many parts of the region, especially the river valleys. Emporium and Driftwood have cell service, but Sinnemahoning and Sizerville State Parks do not. Be prepared and have routes downloaded ahead of time, and consider carrying a satellite communicator for emergency calls.

ABOUT THE GRAVEL ROUTE NETWORK

The Wild Elk Gravel network features **17 day routes ranging from 8–84 miles**, built for riders who crave exploration over crowds. Seven routes land in the 20–35 mile sweet spot, and another five come in under 20 miles—perfect for shorter windows or stacked adventure days.

This terrain is unmistakably PA Wilds: **long climbs, narrow hollows, and ridgetops with sweeping views**, where elevation gain is earned early and rewarded often. Grades average 5–7%—just enough to make you work without breaking your spirit—though the region saves a few 8–9% grinders and punchy surprises for the climbers who like to suffer a bit.

Surfaces run about **80% unpaved**, with several routes hitting 100%. Expect everything from smooth, fast gravel to occasional chunky, dirt-rock mixes typical of rugged forest roads. Recent regrading can create pockets of looser gravel, and rain can turn some dirt sections muddy and rutted—but that’s part of the Wild Elk experience.

Routes launch from four primary hubs—**Emporium, Driftwood, Sizerville State Park, and Sinnemahoning State Park**—with Emporium offering the best access to food, lodging, and last-minute supplies. Beyond town limits, services are sparse as the landscape opens into deep public land—ideal for riders chasing solitude, scenery, and that once-in-a-lifetime elk encounter that makes this region unlike anywhere else you can ride a gravel bike.

ROUTES BEGIN FROM FOUR HUBS:

1. **Emporium, PA** – largest town, best access to food/lodging
2. **Sizerville State Park** – quiet forested basecamp
3. **Sinnemahoning State Park** – wildlife-rich gateway to First Fork Valley
4. **Driftwood, PA** – river-valley outpost connecting to big climbs



EMPORIUM



1. Emporium - Elk Under Dark Skies

13.1 mi · 1,100 ft · 81% unpaved

2. Emporium - Eddie's Divide

18.2 mi · 1,493 ft · 58% unpaved

3. Emporium - Black Squirrel Backcountry

27.7 mi · 2,580 ft · 89% unpaved

4. Emporium - Hicks Run Rut Ramble

33.8 mi · 2,879 ft · 82% unpaved

5. Emporium's Three Ridges

50.2 mi · 4,707 ft · 79% unpaved

View routes on **Ride with GPS** for the latest version including any relevant updates.



EMPORIUM

Black Squirrel Backcountry



Launch from downtown Emporium, and within minutes, you'll leave civilization behind, climbing a peaceful gated road on a steady grade toward the mountaintop. To bypass a stretch of private property on Bauer Hollow Road, the route now uses a new connector trail to reach Steam Mill Road. It's slated for future gravel improvements, but for now it's a rough-cut doubletrack with two small stream crossings that may require a dismount and one short, steep pitch before you regain the road.

A mellow, rolling climb will get you up to Ridge Road, where a one-mile detour north to Salt Run Vista supplies a worthwhile panoramic view. From the Ridge / Steam Mill junction, a gradual, 10-mile descent awaits along Hunts Run all the way down to the Sinnemahoning Creek. But the climbing isn't done—there's one more punchy climb up Britton Hill before descending again to the main road. Note that there is a stream crossing with no bridge at the entrance to Britton Hill at mile 23.4. It's typically rideable, but you will likely get wet feet.

Keep your eyes out for the elusive black squirrel, a rare color variant of the gray squirrel caused by a genetic mutation that causes increased melanin production. They are most common in the northern parts of Pennsylvania, with frequent sightings in the woods around Emporium.



EMPORIUM

Eddie's Divide



This route may be short, but it offers a rewarding experience. Begin with a warm-up through town before tackling a 2.5-mile climb up Eddie's Run Road, which transforms into gravel and then Dividing Ridge Road. While steady, expect some steep sections. At the top, enjoy flowy terrain on a gated doubletrack road with a remote feel, traversing the divide between North Creek and Fourmile Run valleys.

The second half of the route slopes downhill on gravel and then pavement as it loops back to Emporium. The last three miles run alongside a main road (Rt. 155) with wide shoulders and good sightlines.

Elk State Forest features northern hardwood and mixed oak forest, home to Pennsylvania's reintroduced elk herd. This route provides a glimpse into that larger landscape with long wooded views and quiet gravel roads. Keep in mind, Dividing Ridge Road is within a DCNR ADA Mobility Device Hunting Area, so avoid it during peak hunting season (the two weeks following Thanksgiving).

EMPORIUM

Elk Under Dark Skies



Begin at the entrance to the May Hollow Skyway, which is a new Dark Sky Park, built on a reclaimed landfill and worth a visit on a clear night to enjoy some of the darkest skies in the east. The varied landscapes provide excellent wildlife viewing opportunities, including the potential to see elk due to favorable habitat and feed plots in the area.

The route winds through the Sterling Run Conservation Easement, a partnership between Elk State Forest and Lyme Timber to conserve 9,000 acres of land for public recreation. Featuring rolling terrain, the area has been described by riders as a “gravel bike playground.”

While this route stays on gravel roads, the doubletrack Marshall Farm Trails wind throughout the area and are open for bikes to explore. They offer a mix of surfaces, and for some of the trails, a wider tire (43mm+) is recommended.

If you prefer to save the 15-min drive and start this loop from Emporium, you can ride up and back past the Emporium Overlook on Whittemore Road/North Broad Street. This makes a 22-mile lollipop with a mix of pavement and gravel that was used for the 2025 Beyond the Dirt Shakeout Ride (ridewithgps.com/routes/51970734).



EMPORIUM

Emporium's Three Ridges



This route showcases highlights around Emporium, featuring Ridge Road, Sizerville State Park, and Cameron County Dark Sky Park. Start with a steady climb from Emporium up Eddie's Run/Dividing Ridge Road, then enjoy the rolling hills before descending Four Mile Road. Stay alert for the steep left turn onto Sizer Run Road, leading to a thrilling downhill through a creek valley.

After a mile on a busier main road, bear right toward Sizerville State Park for a second climb. Marvel at the tall pines on Crooked Run Road before taking in the views at Crooked Run Vista and Salt Run Vista, then descend to Sinnemahoning Creek.

In Cameron, check out the metal railroad bridge before climbing Cameron Road, flanked by rock walls. A quick detour to Sterling Run leads to The Little Museum and Bear Den Smokehouse. The final climb takes you up May Hollow Road past the Dark Sky Park before a fast descent back to Emporium. Don't forget to pause at the Emporium Overlook on your way down!

EMPORIUM

Hicks Run Rut Ramble



This loop passes through the Hicks Run area, one of the more popular destinations in the region for elk viewing, especially during the fall rut season (mid-September through mid-October). You'll climb immediately from Emporium to the Dark Sky viewing area, and pass through a mix of state forests, state game lands, and private camps along the route before dropping back down to the West Creek Recreational Trail to finish out the last few miles of the ride.

Note that this route passes through State Game Lands, which requires you to wear blaze orange during the main hunting seasons from mid-November through mid-January. However, it's good practice to wear orange during the fall (popular seasons begin in late September). Hunting is a significant part of life for many in north-central Pennsylvania, and numerous cabins along these routes serve as hunting camps that come alive in the fall and winter.

Hicks Run Road can be busy with elk viewers during the fall rut and also intersects the Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trails. When approaching horses, the best practice is to slow or stop/walk your bike to pass, as some horses may be easily spooked by bikes.



SIZERVILLE



1. Sizerville - Crooked Cowley
16.8 mi · 1,495 ft · 95% Unpaved
2. Sizerville - Bark Shanty Bounty
29.6 mi · 2,728 ft · 53% unpaved
3. Sizerville - Austin Dam Discovery
33.1 mi · 2,796 ft · 75% Unpaved
4. Sizerville - Public Lands Grand Tour,
Elk State Forest
54.8 mi · 4,915 ft · 90% Unpaved

View routes on **Ride with GPS** for the latest version including any relevant updates.



SIZERVILLE

Austin Dam Discovery



Pedal through history on this loop past the haunting remains of Austin Dam. Built in 1909 to serve the Bayless Pulp and Paper Mill, the dam was the largest of its kind in Pennsylvania at the time. Though corners were cut in its construction to save money, it was referred to as “the dam that could not break.” Tragically, in 1911, the dam broke, flooding the town of Austin downstream and killing 78 people.

The remains of the concrete dam still stand and can be explored via a network of trails and interpretive exhibits at the Austin Dam Memorial Park. The Park is also host to a few events throughout the year, including live music (“dam jams”), art festivals, and a haunted trail around Halloween. Primitive camping is available via Hipcamp.

Traverse the western edge of the park on a dirt road (rough in spots with big puddles during wet periods), passing a large concrete tower, which is part of the remains of the paper mill. Without foliage on the trees, some of the other remains can be seen from the road.

In Austin, stop at Perry’s Country Store or Big Mike’s Dairy-Dine for a mid-ride snack before a few more miles of pavement and a long but mostly gradual and very scenic climb back up to the top of the ridge via Portage Road.



SIZERVILLE

Bark Shanty Bounty



This loop features a mix of forests and farmlands, showcasing the region's rural nature along a historical route. The biggest climb starts from Sizerville up to Ridge Road, followed by rolling terrain. After a paved descent, you'll navigate a busy mile on Rt. 607 before turning onto Gas Well Road for another gravel climb leading to Bark Shanty Road. Near the ruins of the Bark Shanty Civilian Conservation Corps camp, the route highlights the contributions of its all-African-American workforce in the 1930s.

The climb presents scenic pastoral views before transitioning to pavement in Keating Summit, where a restaurant is nearby. After a quarter mile on the busier Rt. 155, turn left onto Gardeau Road. A short climb leads to a downhill stretch through farms and homes. Around mile 25.5, look for a stone mausoleum in Gardeau, marked "Parker" for Noah Parker, a significant figure in the 1800s, surrounded by legends of hidden pirate treasure.

SIZERVILLE

Crooked Cowley



Experience Elk State Forest with this quick gravel loop from Sizerville State Park, ideal for newcomers to gravel riding. The route features a gentle climb up Cowley Hill Road, turning right onto Ridge Road, which is a bit sandy. Roll through to Crooked Run Road; you can either descend directly or take a ¼ mile detour to Salt Run Vista for a scenic view. On your way down, enjoy a grove of white pines planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

Sizerville State Park has a cozy campground (mid-April to mid-December) and hiking trails like the Sizerville Nature Trail, a 3-mile loop showcasing Eastern Hemlock, PA's State Tree. A swimming pool is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Cyclists can park at the snowmobile lot on East Cowley Run Road, just past the pool



SIZERVILLE

Elk Public Lands Grand Tour



The Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Public Lands Ride route highlights the state's public lands, featuring the Elk State Forest route that connects Sizerville and Sinnemahoning State Parks. Primarily gravel, the route includes scenic Ridge Road and a few short paved sections on Rt. 872.

Inside Sinnemahoning State Park, riders can enjoy the Lowlands Trail, known for its elk sightings and views of Sinnemahoning Creek and the George B. Stevenson Reservoir. A 2-mile round-trip detour on Brooks Run Road leads to the Brooks Run Fire Tower, a historic wildfire lookout from the 1940s. The route also intersects with the challenging 33-mile Bucktail Path. For shorter options, consider Ridge Vistas Panorama and Crooked Cowley.

SINNEMAHONING



1. Sinnemahoning - Lowlands Elkwatch
8.4 mi · 222 ft · 91% Unpaved

2. Sinnemahoning - Ridge Vistas Panorama
27.2 mi · 2,139 ft · 83% Unpaved

3. Sinnemahoning - Dam Lolli
25.3 mi · 3,132 ft · 100% Unpaved

View routes on **Ride with GPS** for the latest version including any relevant updates.





SINNEMAHONING

Dam Lolli



Start your ride by crossing over the breast of the George B. Stevenson Dam, built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1955 as part of a broad initiative to manage flood control in the Susquehanna River Basin. Spanning the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning Creek, the dam creates the 142-acre lake that is part of Sinnemahoning State Park and a haven for non-motorized paddling and fishing.

This all-unpaved lollipop first climbs a gated road to the rolling terrain atop the ridge on the eastern side of the state park before dropping back down a hollow along Trout Run. After a gradual 4-mile descent, head back up to the ridge via Wycoff Road, a steady grade along a mossy stream scenic enough to distract you from the climb. You'll retrace your route back towards the dam, ending by descending the initial climb.

The first climb/last descent from the dam to Montour Road is a little chunky in spots. There is a small stream crossing without a bridge that is very rideable, but may result in wet feet if the water is high.

SINNEMAHONING

Lowlands Elk Watch



The Lowlands Trail in Sinnemahoning State Park is a great family-friendly ride that runs alongside the First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek. It's close to campgrounds and the Wildlife Center, which has exhibits on local natural and cultural history. In the fall, elk can often be spotted along the trail.

While the mapped route uses Park Drive for a loop, you can also ride the trail out and back to avoid vehicle traffic. Be cautious, as Park Drive is one-way for cars but legal both ways for cyclists.

For a treat, head south on Park Drive for about a mile to the Lakeview Store at the intersection of Park Drive and Rt. 872, where you can enjoy delicious Perry's ice cream, including their special ice cream flight on weekends.



SINNEMAHONING

Ridge Vistas Panorama



Ridge Road is a stunning highlight of the region, featuring nine nearby vistas similar to a “miniature Blue Ridge Parkway” without the crowds. It’s a favored spot for motorcyclists, Sunday drivers, and gravel cyclists, but traffic is usually light, allowing for peaceful views of endless, forest-covered mountains. This area in Pennsylvania is part of the Appalachian Plateau’s “Deep Valleys,” known for its steep, narrow valleys.

The journey begins at the Sinnemahoning State Park Wildlife Viewing Area, warming up on the 5-mile Lowlands Trail before climbing Brooks Run Road, which boasts beautiful moss-covered rocks and mini waterfalls. Along the way, you’ll pass the Brooks Run Cabin, available for rent year-round. The ride culminates with a scenic downhill descent to Bailey Run Road.

DRIFTWOOD



1. Driftwood - Top of the World

5.8 mi · 1,252 ft · 74% Unpaved

2. Driftwood - Table Falls

23.7 mi · 1,819 ft · 68% Unpaved

3. Driftwood - Quehanna Elk Wilds

69.5 mi · 5,821 ft · 80% Unpaved

4. Driftwood - Bat Bunkers & Bucktails

84.9 mi · 7,826 ft · 76% Unpaved

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DRIFTWOOD

Bat Bunkers & Bucktails



This route features four significant climbs that lead to some of the most scenic spots in the county, including the George B. Stevenson Dam and the Top of the World overlook.

The first climb starts gradually, steepening near Table Falls. At the top, along the Quehanna Highway, you can explore the historical “bat bunkers” from the Cold War, which once marked the boundary for nuclear jet engine testing.

After a short stretch on Rt. 120 in Sinnemahoning, where traffic increases, the steepest climb on Montour Road rewards you with a scenic ridgetop and a fun descent to George B. Stevenson Dam. Stop for a snack at the Lakeview Store before tackling Brooks Run Road and Ridge Road, ending with a downhill ride to Bucktail Overlook for one last breathtaking view before finishing the journey.

DRIFTWOOD

Quehanna Elk Wilds



Pedal through Benezette, home to Pennsylvania's wild elk herd, and explore the vast Quehanna Wild Area. Start with a steep climb on Mason Hill Road, stopping at Bucktail Overlook for scenic views. Cycle through prime elk viewing spots near Hicks Run, Dents Run, and Benezette, with the Winslow Hill Elk Viewing Area offering great vantage points, especially in the morning and evening.

Benezette has dining options and a gas station, plus lodging like the Benezette Hotel or primitive camping at Medix Run. Try the "Elk Herd" hotdog flight at Elk Life cafe!

As you ride, the gradual Medix Grade takes you up to the Quehanna Plateau. At Lost Run Road, a gated path leads to the site of a former nuclear reactor, now a quiet field. Finish your ride with a long descent down Hoover Road back to Driftwood.



DRIFTWOOD

Table Falls



This route offers a gradual climb and a fast descent through the Quehanna Wild Area, including a stop at Table Falls. Starting on pavement from Driftwood, you'll pass through Castle Garden and cross the Bennett Branch of Sinnemahoning Creek on Mix Run Road. The gravel climb remains mellow before steepening, with a short trail to Table Falls marked by a small sign before a bridge. The falls are most impressive when water levels are high.

At the top, briefly join the Quehanna Highway and then head left onto Lincoln Road for a few miles of flat terrain, ideal for elk spotting. The descent becomes chunkier before returning to pavement on Mix Run Road to finish the ride.

DRIFTWOOD

Top of the World



For a quick yet challenging ride, tackle the 1,250-foot climb (2.5 miles at 9%) to the Bucktail Overlook, or “Top of the World.” The stunning 360-degree view of the Sinnemahoning Creek watershed and its low light pollution make it a great stargazing spot.

Start at Driftwood’s Bucktail Monument Park, honoring the Civil War Bucktail Regiment. After a mile of paved road, turn onto Mason Hill Road for the gravel ascent. The climb is steady, and be aware of moderate traffic, as this road leads to both the overlook and the Fred Woods Trail, a scenic 4.5-mile loop.

Near the top, a sign directs you to the overlook, followed by a short, steep climb. Enjoy the view, then prepare for a fun descent back to Driftwood, staying alert for vehicles and loose gravel.



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DAY RIDES

20-60 mile gravel loops from welcoming small towns and state parks.

BACKCOUNTRY BIKEPACKING

Multi-day adventures through the heart of the Elk Range and Pennsylvania Wilds.



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Ride through the largest free-roaming elk herd in the Northeastern U.S.

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