

ACTIVITY:
LAKE OKEECHOBEE SCENIC TRAIL
(L.O.S.T. Trail)

LOCATION:

HERBERT HOOVER DIKE
CLEWISTON, FLORIDA

WEB SITE:

<http://www.lostcyclists.com>
<http://www.clewistoninn.com>

CONTACT:

none



FEES:

There are no fees to use L.O.S.T. Trail

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY: Bicycling M.B.

THE REAL SCOOP:

The L.O.S.T. Trail is a 126 mile trail set atop the Herbert Hoover Dike, circumnavigating Lake Okeechobee, and is a part of the Florida Trail system. As of 2006, approximately half of the L.O.S.T. Trail is paved, while the remainder is hard-packed rock (some of which is washboard), and scheduled to be paved. The paved portion of the trail can be traversed by almost any kind of bicycle, but the non-paved portions require a “fat tire” hybrid or trail bike (shock absorbers highly recommended). The entire L.O.S.T. Trail takes about 2 days (a little over 60 miles per day... half of it unpaved) to ride around the entire lake. There are very few locations where potable water or snacks can be purchased, so bring food and several liters of water for each rider. Bring spare tubes and tools. You will definitely dehydrate in the sun. Sun block is a must! It is also a very good idea to have a “sweep van” to pick up stragglers along the way, and be in cell phone contact. There is pretty good cell phone reception, especially along the south shore abutting U.S. 27. **IMPORTANT: Camping along the Lake is NOT recommended, as there are extremely large alligators that haunt the shores.**

In lieu of camping, the historic Clewiston Inn is a great alternative. It provides easy access to the Trail, and is a bicycle-friendly hotel. They will let you store your bicycles in your hotel room or in their storage room. This historic hotel was the headquarters of a pilot-trainee school for British flyers during WW II. Warning... it’s haunted! http://www.clewistoninn.com/ghost_tour.html

If circumnavigating Lake Okeechobee: Stay overnight at Clewiston Inn, and the next morning, transport cyclists and bicycles to the KOA Campground in the town of Okeechobee, on the northwest side of the Lake (make arrangements in advance!). Leave a vehicle in Clewiston, or bring along a sweep car. Get on the Trail at the town of Okeechobee and head down the east side of the Lake. The trail is paved until just north of Pahokee, where it again turns to pavement all the way

back to Clewiston. Try to get back before sunset. Enjoy dinner at the Inn.

The next day, arise early and cycle out of Clewiston on the Trail heading west toward Moore Haven. The asphalt trail runs all the way to Moore Haven and then turns to washboard rock upon leaving town. When you hit Hwy ____, do not cross the highway to the trail across the road, instead head north on

Hwy ____ until you pick up the Herbert Hoover Dike again in 2 or 3 miles. This portion of the Trail has more miles of unpaved path than the east side of the Lake. Pick up your cars at the KOA and head home.

If planning a one-day ride: This ride traverses the most scenic portion of Lake Okeechobee, the south shore, and it is 100% paved along its entire length.. Start at Pahokee, where you can enter the L.O.S.T. Trail in town. (There are a limited number of access points up to the trail around the Lake perimeter so you must plan your ingress and egress points in advance.) Head south, and then east to Clewiston. About a 30 mile ride (Scouts and leaders can double-back 10 miles to earn their 50-mile ride requirement and end up at Clewiston). Stay overnight at the Clewiston Inn.

The next day, if there are willing souls, a short, all-paved round trip westward to Moore Haven from Clewiston on the L.O.S.T. Trail can be made. This portion of the trail traverses the southwest corner of the Lake and passes, elevated, through sugar cane fields. It's almost surreal, especially on a foggy morning. There is a store to purchase snacks on the opposite side of the bridge at Moore Haven. You can retrace your ride back to Clewiston, and take off for Miami after lunch.

A few insights: Clewiston is not a particularly safe town to be walking around in the evening, so limit your nighttime activities outside of the hotel. There is a small museum in Clewiston commemorating the disastrous hurricane of 1928 that claimed 2,500 lives when the original 6-foot high levee was breached. Skeletons of storm victims were found even years later in the fields around Clewiston. The resulting 30-foot tall Herbert Hoover Dike was then built to prevent future disasters. Recommended reading prior to your trip: Black Cloud, by Eliot Kleinberg and Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston. Both books tell the story of the 1928 hurricane and Lake Okeechobee.

This is a pretty safe bike ride with no exposure to automobile traffic, and the Scouts all seem to really enjoy it.

