

BOONE TRACE MOTORCYCLE RUN DESCRIPTION  
LOWER HALF/ SOUTH TO NORTH

This article was written to give riders an idea of the general route of Boone Trace from Martin Station located eight miles beyond the Cumberland Gap into Virginia, through the Gap and traveling north, as did Daniel Boone, terminating at Levi Jackson State Park just south of London, Ky. Points of interest will also be described. To remind you, Boone Trace, specifically, was the path Daniel Boone and his 30 “axemen” blazed up through the Gap starting at Kingsport, TN and ending at Boonesborough during March and April of 1775. It was the first road, ever, into Kentucky for the purpose of bringing in settlers and had an enormous historical impact on the founding of Kentucky and opening of the west. Proof of this fact is that 200,000 settlers followed him along this route over the next 20 years, and Kentucky was established in 1792.

We have to use the existing roads to experience the route since the original trail was just a dirt bridle path, big enough only for horses and not even wagons. Roads evolved out of that path, even I-75, and we have back tracked them to the oldest, most primitive roads that come as close to the original trail as possible to recreate the experience. You are going to love it!

The following is a description of some of what you will be seeing and doing:

- 1) The trip starts at Martin Station located at the Wilderness Road State Park in Virginia which was the final gathering point for settlers before embarking off into The Wilderness, leaving civilization behind, likely forever. You can imagine their sense of excitement and apprehension. At the park, there is an accurate replica of the fort with people dressed up in period clothes who are all very knowledgeable and helpful.

Note: A side stop of interest would be to proceed east on Hwy 58 about two miles beyond Martin Station to the burial site of Daniel Boone’s oldest son James who was killed by Indians on a prior attempt to enter Kentucky made by Boone and a group in 1773. The marker is located about 400 feet off of the main highway on the right on Norray Rd (Hwy 684).

- 2) After leaving the park on Hwy 58 towards the Gap, there is The Daniel Boone Trail on the south side of the Gap. This is one of the few places along the entire trail where you can get off your bike and walk along the actual dirt of Boone Trace. It has been identified by the park as authentic, and the landscape returned to its natural state of 1775 as much as possible.
- 3) On the way to the above site, the view of the Cumberland Mountains to the north is spectacular, and it is easy to see why the Gap became so important, as the towering mountains must have been foreboding and impregnable to settlers were it not for the Gap. Also, the best view of Cumberland Gap itself is in this area from the south side. It is not as well seen from the northern perspective.
- 4) After passing through the tunnel, the Visitors Center of the National Park will be on the left. It has excellent displays and a movie about the Gap. The park officials are also very knowledgeable and helpful in directing how to experience the park. One

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area that is a “must” is to walk to the “Saddle of the Gap.” It’s about a one hour walk up and back and represents the narrow hallowed ground where ALL of those tens of thousands of settlers had to pass. It is also the point where history “turned,” and Kentucky and the entire west were opened up. Another tourist attraction is to drive up to the “Pinnacle,” a scenic overlook that views the Gap from above. It’s really worth the effort, but the ride up to it is on a tricky switch-back road probably suited only for experienced bikers.

- 5) The route through Middlesboro which basically followed Yellow Creek is somewhat difficult to figure out since the route of the creek has been rerouted because of flooding. However, there are some “fixes” along the way. Starting down Cumberland Avenue, turning up 15th Street and left on to Asbury Street, the junction of Bennet Fork and Yellow Creek can be seen on the right, which is where Boone crossed the creek. Then turning up 19th Street to Hurst Rd, the Oldest House in Middlesboro is located on the right, built about 1800. It was on Boone Trace and therefore represents a “marker” of it.
- 6) Connecting with Hwy 3486 then leads to the town of Meldrum and closely approximates the route of Boone Trace following Yellow Creek on the right.
- 7) Proceeding up US 25E to Pineville, the mountains down in this area are again spectacular. Just north of Middlesboro on the right is “Rocky Face” which is a large mountain, the face of which has a rock wall exposed and was supposedly named by Daniel Boone.
- 8) Approaching Pineville, the Narrows Overlook is on the right near Hwy 119. This area in the mountains is called “The Narrows” and represents a water gap in Pine Mountain where the Cumberland River snakes through the mountains allowing for a second gap for travelers to pass through. (The Cumberland Gap being a “land” gap). The climb to the overlook is about 1/2 mile practically straight up and probably not too strenuous if you don’t have bad knees like me.
- 9) Next comes Cumberland Ford where Boone Trace crossed the Cumberland River. The marker for this site is at the corner of US 25E and Hwy 66, but the ford site can only be seen from Hwy 66 requiring an extra stop here to view it.

Note: An interesting attraction in Pineville that can be viewed from about this location is along the mountain ridge line to the west where a gigantic boulder hangs precariously on the edge of the mountain supposedly secured by a huge chain. Whether the chain would be strong enough to hold the boulder if it did let go is surely debatable.

- 10) On a bike to cross the river, it is necessary to turn right on W. Tennessee Street, cross the bridge and wind through the town of Wallsend. It then links up with Hwy 2015 which becomes Eli Hollow Rd and is dead on Boone Trace following the Cumberland River, now on the left.

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- 11) After The Trace emerges on to US 25E, it almost immediately dives back down to the right on Evergreen Rd which leads to the Daniel Boone Park at Old Flat Lick. There, is located a beautiful little park, well-kept, and a good model for future parks along The Trace. Also, Old Flat Lick is where the three major historical roads, at that time, diverged traveling north. These were the Warrior's Path, Boone Trace and the Wilderness Road. The Warrior's Path , the old Indian trail on which they waged their wars, splits off to the east; and, opposite the park, there is actually a street sign which reads, "Warrior's Path."

At the park, there is a monument which makes the most profound and relevant statement about Boone Trace found anywhere:

"No other road is of greater historical significance to the founding of Kentucky and the opening of the west (than Boone Trace)---."

- 12) Leaving Flat Lick on to US 25E, Boone Trace loops east around Barbourville roughly approximated by Hwys 3439, 3440, 11 and 2418.
- 13) North of Barbourville, Boone Trace turns to the west along the Poplar Branch of the Richland Creek up through the town of Gray. Unfortunately for motorcycles, the road that closely follows this route has about 0.9 mile of gravel road; and, therefore, not suitable for a large group of bikes. The alternative to this route then becomes Hwy 1223 which is a bit north, and not exactly on The Trace, but redeemed by the fact that there is a short but spectacular vista along this road which could rival the best anywhere. This road also ends up at Gray where US 25E has to be crossed and is a dangerous intersection. So please be alert and on guard for traffic making this crossing.
- 14) After crossing US 25E and taking Hwys 233 and 830 into Laurel County, we come to one of the treasures of Boone Trace, Raccoon Springs. This was a favorite campsite for Daniel Boone and other "longhunters" (explorer/hunters who went out for long periods of time), probably because of the availability of good water from two springs at the site. The legend is that Boone was getting a drink of water from the spring when a raccoon jumped out and scared him. Hence, the name. It is on the backside of private property owned by a cordial fellow, Bill DeWeiss, who so far has been nice enough to let us visit the site. It would wise, however, not to cause too much commotion or aggravate him in any way, like by blocking his driveway, etc. Also, show some gratitude if you get the chance, and hopefully he will keep letting us come back. A couple of bucks might not hurt either.
- 15) From this point at Raccoon Springs, where there is a 1942 stone marker, Boone Trace cut off northwest cross-country through Happy Hollow and by the town of Fariston. There are no roads to follow it directly, but there are two markers that can be seen by zig-zaging a little, one on Slate Ridge Rd sitting on the hillside to the right and the other on US 25 in a field next to a telephone pole on the right at Fariston. The Trace connects these last three markers.

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- 16) Turning in towards Levi Jackson State Park off of US 25 on to Hwy 1189 is the location of Modrel's Station, a safe house in the Wilderness, situated on a hill at the southwest corner of that intersection.
- 17) Entering the back of the park by way of Jackson-Fariston Rd, there is another one of the few places along the trail where a rider can get off the bike and walk a short segment of the actual dirt path of Boone Trace. This claim, made by the park, is confirmed by the fact that there is a 1942 stone marker on one end and a 1915 DAR marker on the other. At the end of the ten minute dirt trail is the McNitt Cemetery, the burial site of a family of 24 who were attacked and massacred by Indians in 1786, one of the worst disasters among others to occur along Boone Trace.
- 18) This essentially ends the ride, and it is up to the individual rider to get home, about one and one-half hour from Lexington by Interstate or US 25. Please realize when the ride is over that you have participated in the effort to save "that little road" (Boone Trace). If you want more information, check the web-site [www.boonetrace1775.com](http://www.boonetrace1775.com)

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