

## HBC GREAT RIDES LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS LOOP

Recommended by Steve Field, Others



View of the Jefferson River canyon, from the Caverns entrance  
(Caverns closed during winter)  
Photo from Wikipedia L&C Caverns article

**Link:** <http://ridewithgps.com/routes/3789205>

**Length:** 34 miles

**Begins:** Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park,  
<http://stateparks.mt.gov/lewis-and-clark-caverns>

**Ends:** Same, although the trip could be looped just as easily  
from Cardwell

**Cumulative elevation gained and lost:** 1,990 ft.

**Highest Point** (second pass): 4,920 ft. midway along Hwy 359,  
near Mile 19

**High Point** (first pass): 4,860 ft., 1.5 miles before the  
intersection of highways 287 and 359, near mile 10.5

**Low Point:** 4,190 ft. crossing the Jefferson River (on a bridge,  
conveniently) near mile 6

**Surface:** All surfaces are paved

**Traffic:** Variable, very light to moderately busy

**Best time of day:** If ridden early in the season, as the day  
warms up, before the wind begins to blow (your results may  
vary). Later in the season, swap heat for cold.

**Best time of year:** All year, except when snow or ice is on the  
highways. This stretch is often clear if we are having a dry spell.

**Cautions:** A few stretches can have traffic, and many stretches,  
while less traveled, have small shoulders.

**Factoid:** Did you know that Lewis & Clark Caverns was  
Montana's first State Park?

This ride begins and ends at the Park's Visitor Center, which is  
open all year, providing parking, water, and restrooms. Leaving  
the Park, riding in a clockwise direction, the ride follows the river  
and soon climbs over a series of sizable rollers. At Mile 5.2 your

route turns onto US 287 and crosses the Jefferson River.  
After crossing the river bottomland, US 287 rears up and  
climbs steadily to Mile 10.5 (about 4,860 ft). At Mile 12 you  
turn onto Highway 359, descend for a bit, then climb again  
over 4,900 feet for your second pass of the day. From here  
it's all downhill, but you should be prepared for possible  
headwinds (and hope for tailwinds). You'll cross the  
Jefferson River again at Mile 26.6, immediately after you'll  
turn onto MT 2 for your scenic return to the Cavern's  
Visitor Center.

This is a great, early season ride, often free from snow  
mid-winter. If we get a warm, relatively wind-wise calm  
day, this is a great place to go and spin the kinks out. If the  
loop sounds like too much, there's no reason you couldn't  
ride from the Caverns, upstream to Cardwell, and back,  
and then call it a day after a short, flat, astonishingly scenic  
ride.

There is a convenience store and gas station in Cardwell,  
at Mile 28 on the map, and country store and a restaurant  
in Harrison, a mile south of Mile 12. The LaHood  
Steakhouse, at Mile 28.3, is open late afternoons and  
offers a welcome option for an after-ride dinner. <http://www.lahoodpark.com>. There are restrooms and parking at  
the Lewis & Clark Caverns, which is open all year except  
Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day. Phone  
ahead and check to make sure the services you seek are  
available.

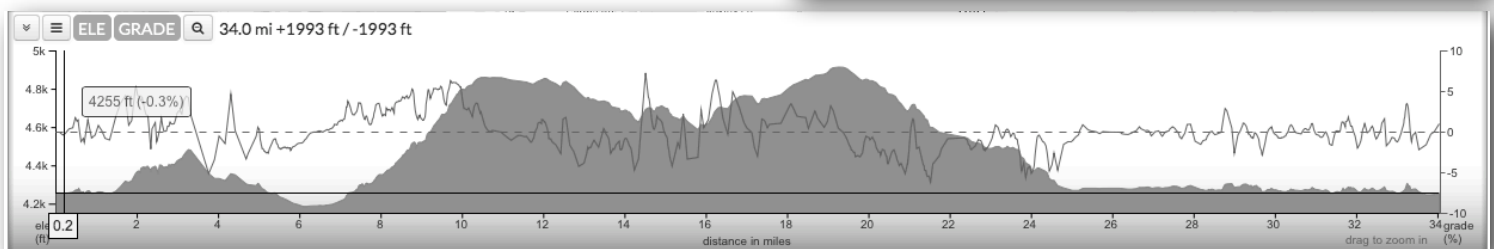
### 2014 Local Bike Shop Discounts

Helena's local bike shops offer HBC members discounts on  
selected items, and they provide more than quality bikes,  
repair, and accessories. These shops provide face-to-face  
customer support—you know them and they know you. They  
invest considerable time promoting better biking in Helena.  
Your dollar spent locally sustains Helena's economy, while  
building a better bicycling environment.

**Big Sky Cycling and Fitness** offers HBC members a 5%  
discount off the regular price on tires, tubes, parts, clothing  
and accessories. A discount is not available on special orders,  
complete bikes, or sale priced items.

**The Garage** extends a discount to HBC members, offering a  
one-time 20% off of any tune up package. Details: One  
discounted tune-up/year; Discount on the tune-up package  
only (other labor and parts are the normal price); Must be  
scheduled; Still comes with a complimentary beer. HBC  
members are invited to pick up a free "The Garage" die-cut  
vinyl sticker.

**Great Divide Cyclery** offers a 5% discount on tubes, tires,  
and Hammer Nutrition Products to HBC members.



Lewis & Clark Caverns Loop Elevation Profile, from RideWithGPS.com

# LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS LOOP

HBC Great Rides, January 2014



**Please read:** You are responsible for your own safety, so please ride safely. Wear a helmet, be visible and ride predictably. Control your speed on descents. This ride includes rough road surfaces, and you will be exposed to varying amounts of traffic and potentially dangerous weather. Portions of this ride are remote, where timely help may be unavailable. Conditions change due to alternations in routes, uncertain weather, changes in traffic, deteriorated road surfaces, construction activities, and other hazards or inconveniences too numerous to foretell or specify. These directions and this map, like all maps and directions, may become outdated and inaccurate without warning. The Helena Bicycle Club (HBC), its officers, volunteers, or contributors of these rides, trip leaders, and others associated with this bicycle ride description and map cannot be held responsible for the conditions of this route, or for any aspect of your ride. HBC is not responsible for any injuries or damages sustained or occurring while riding this route.