

“Bikes talk to each other like dogs, they wag their wheels and tinkle their bells, the riders let their mounts mingle.”

Daniel Behrman, *The Man Who Loved Bicycles*

WHITMORE LAKE LOOP

ROUTE: Dexter, the corner of Huron River Drive and Mast Road, to Ann Arbor, Wheeler Park, 24.3 miles

LINKS WITH: Huron River Drive
Dexter-Chelsea Road

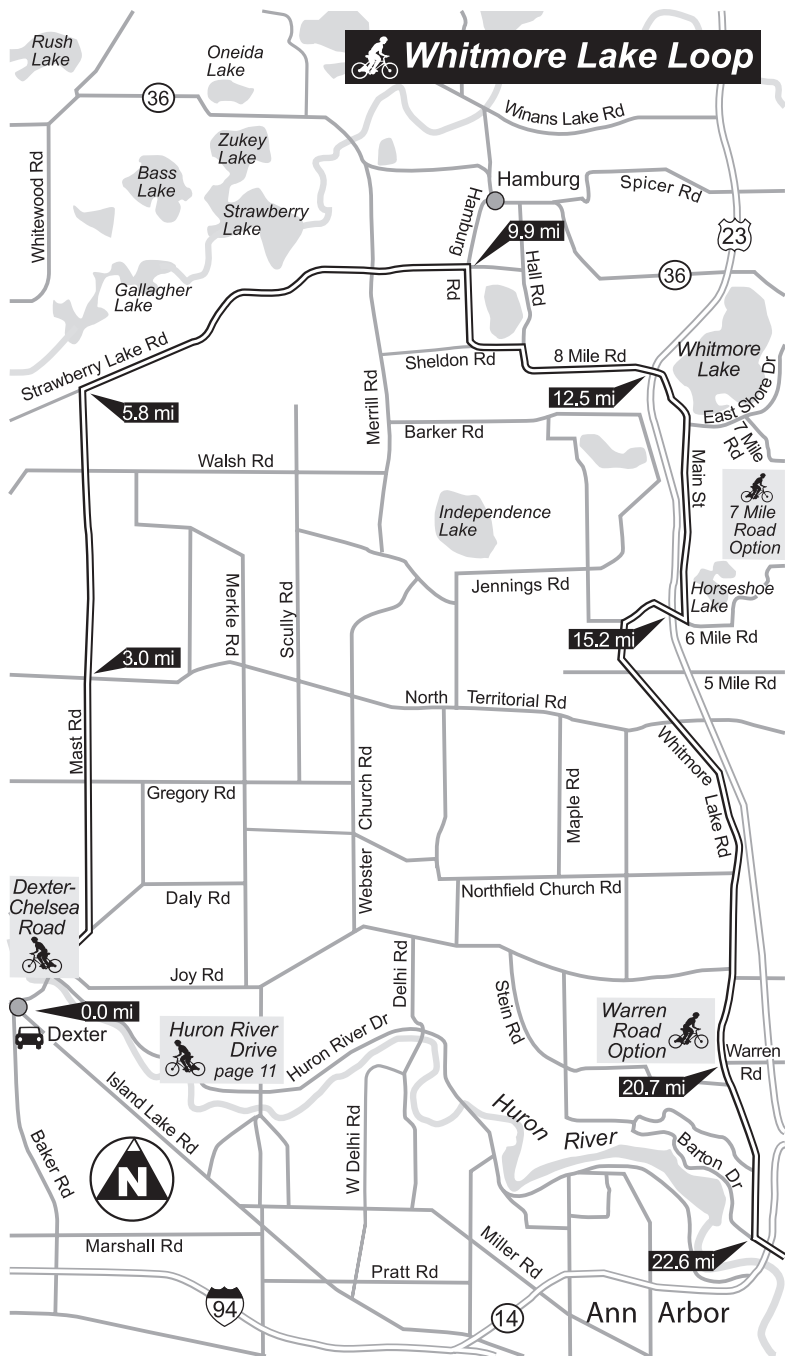
OPTIONS: 7 Mile Road to Pontiac Trail
Warren Road to Pontiac Trail
Alternate route back through Bandemer Park

PARKING: Street parking is available in downtown Dexter and around Wheeler Park in Ann Arbor.

This loop provides an alternate route from Dexter back into Ann Arbor with a few hills, a lake, and a nice, long downhill to finish it off. If you do the route in reverse it also makes a nice ride out of Ann Arbor north to Whitmore Lake.

From the intersection of Huron River Drive and Mast Road near Dexter, head north on Mast Road. The terrain has a few stair-stepping hills but nothing too onerous as you ride a somewhat curving road past fields and houses and some very nice scenic views. The traffic can be busy and cars a bit fast at times. Around mile 2.0, just beyond Gregory Road, look for a charming farmhouse on the left, at 6015 Mast Road, built around 1860 in the Greek revival style.

After crossing North Territorial Road at mile 3.0 you start to see more fields and fewer houses and even a few horses. At mile 5.8 there is a T intersection at Strawberry Lake Road. Although you can't see them just yet, you are now and will remain in the vicinity of many small lakes for some time. Turn right (east) and soon enter Livingston





Boats await a pleasant day on Whitmore Lake

County at mile 6.1. The environment comes to include more houses and fewer farms. At the first stop sign since you turned onto Strawberry Lake Road, turn right on Hamburg Road at mile 9.9; there will be a cemetery ahead and on the left as you make the turn. For the next few miles follow the main paved road as it turns left and then right. As you head in a southeasterly direction, the name of the road changes (although it is not always well marked). From Hamburg Road bear left onto Sheldon Road, then Hall Road, and finally 8 Mile Road.

Numbered mile roads such as 8 Mile Road are a reminder of the early days of the republic. Named long before Michigan became a state, these roads are derived from surveys conducted to organize what was then the Northwest Territory. The baseline for the survey was 8 Mile Road. The road lies about eight miles north of downtown Detroit and serves as the dividing line between Detroit and its northern suburbs, as well as the title of a famous movie starring the rapper Eminem. But none of that is obvious here at the far western end of 8 Mile Road. Interrupted by Whitmore Lake on its way east, 8 Mile Road goes almost all the way to Lake St. Clair.

As you work your way around the lakes in the area, stay on the main, paved road. At mile 12.0 you reenter Washtenaw County and cross some railroad tracks.

At mile 12.5 as you pass over the expressway (US-23) Whitmore Lake comes into view. Called the “most beautiful lake in Michigan” by admirers in 1841, it was formed by retreating glaciers some twelve thousand years ago. For many years it was a major vacation spot for Ann Arbor residents. A toll road once ran between Ann Arbor and Whitmore Lake, and the first bicycle path in Washtenaw County was opened between the two towns in 1897. Today the toll road is gone and one has a choice between the expressway and Whitmore Lake Road, at which you will shortly arrive.

As you pass the lake on your left, 8 Mile Road turns south and becomes Main Street, where one can stop at any of a wide range of shops that cater to the many people who enjoy lakefront homes. There is a convenient, pleasant, and well-stocked gas station at the stoplight at East Shore Drive if all you want is a snack.

- **OPTIONAL 7 MILE ROAD TO PONTIAC TRAIL ROUTE**, 7 miles. If you want to ride farther east you can continue around the southern edge of the lake and up the eastern side to get to 7 Mile Road. Turn left at the stoplight onto East Shore Drive and then right onto 7 Mile Road. Take 7 Mile Road 5.6 miles east to link with the Pontiac Trail route. ❖

Follow Main Street south. After crossing the railroad tracks, at a sign that reads “Athletic Field,” Gloria’s Fine Home Cooking restaurant is just west of Main Street. You get a few glimpses of Horseshoe Lake on your left (which on a map does look like a horseshoe with some use of the imagination). Traffic can be a bit busy here. At 6 Mile Road, mile 15.2, turn right (west) and go back over the expressway (US-23). Soon you will come to Whitmore Lake Road, at which point the environment becomes a good deal less commercial and the road relatively lightly traveled. Turn left (south) onto Whitmore Lake Road at mile 15.6. At mile 17.1 you cross North Territorial Road and acquire a reasonable shoulder. The ride into Ann Arbor is mostly downhill from there. You can see US-23 on your left; during rush hour have a look at the slow-moving cars and be glad you’re enjoying a bicycle ride! At mile 18.8 you pass Saint Patrick’s Church on your right, the oldest English-speaking Catholic parish in the state.

- **OPTIONAL WARREN ROAD TO PONTIAC TRAIL ROUTE**, 1 mile. At mile 20.7 you can take Warren Road east to link with the Pontiac Trail route. ❖

At mile 22.6 you come to the end of Whitmore Lake Road at its intersection with Barton Drive.



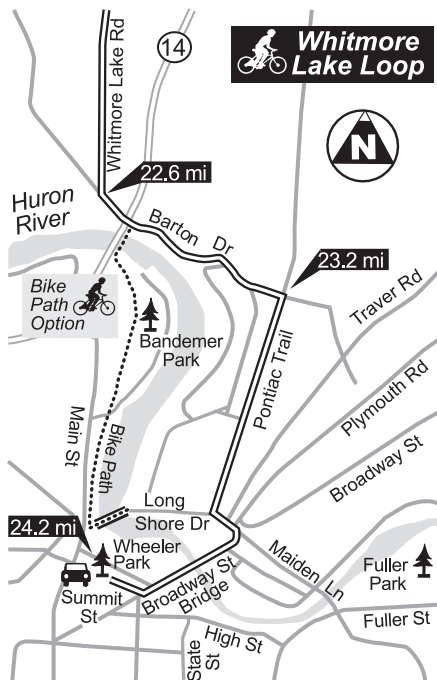
*Saint Patrick's Church
on Whitmore Lake
Road, the oldest
English-speaking
parish in the state*

- **OPTIONAL ALTERNATE ROUTE BACK THROUGH BANDEMER PARK.** A slower but more scenic way to come into Ann Arbor from the end of Whitmore Lake Road (mile 22.6) is to go straight over the Huron River into Bandemer Park. A bike path (also used by pedestrians, Rollerbladers, and others—take care!) goes south with the river on your left. This is a stretch of riding that leaves you amazed that you can be so close to the center of town and yet seem so far out in the country! After a mile the path will turn left (east) and cross the Huron River atop the Argo Dam; walk your bike over this narrow path. You then enter a dirt parking lot and make a quick right turn onto the first paved road, Long Shore Drive, which will bring you to the foot of Pontiac Trail. Turn right onto Pontiac Trail and rejoin the main route immediately before the bridge over the Huron River. Total mileage is about the same for both routes. ❖

Turn left (east) on Barton Drive. At mile 23.2 turn right (south) on Pontiac Trail. After less than a mile you will make a sharp, very short left turn on Swift Street and come to Broadway Street at mile 24.0, on which you can turn right (south) to go over the bridge and back into the center of Ann Arbor. Immediately upon exiting the bridge turn right on Summit Street at mile 24.2 to bring you to Wheeler Park in only one more block.

ROUTE CUES:

- 0.0 Start at the corner of Mast Road and Huron River Drive, Dexter. Go north on Mast Road.
- 3.0 Cross North Territorial Road.
- 5.8 Turn right (east) on Strawberry Lake Road.
- 6.1 Enter Livingston County.
- 9.9 Turn right (south) on Hamburg Road. Follow the paved road as it becomes Sheldon Road, Hall Road, and then 8 Mile Road.
- 12.0 Enter Washtenaw County.
- 12.5 Pass over an expressway (US-23).
- 13.0 8 Mile Road becomes Main Street.
- 15.2 Turn right (east) on 6 Mile Road.
- 15.6 Turn left (south) on Whitmore Lake Road.
- 17.1 Cross North Territorial Road.
- 20.7 Continue on Whitmore Lake Road. Note Warren Road on your left.
- 22.6 Turn left (east) on Barton Drive.
- 23.2 Turn right (south) on Pontiac Trail.



- 23.9 Turn left (west) on Swift Street.
- 24.0 Turn right (south) on Broadway Street.
- 24.2 Turn right (west) on Summit Street.
- 24.3 Arrive at Wheeler Park.