

## Slide Ridge-Shady Pass

Randy Washburne, August, 2009

This loop is about 70 miles of gravel, dirt, or sand Forest Service roads in the Entiat Mountains just west of Lake Chelan in Washington State. Following the route from south to north, it starts at about 1000 feet elevation and climbs to over 5000 feet, then drops almost as far at the mid-point, and regains it all again and more, to almost 6600 feet. My trip around the loop was done in mid-August, 2009.

I had an easy day coming east from Port Angeles across the Cascades on Highway 2, camping in Tumwater Campground just short of Leavenworth. The next morning I cut over the mountains from Leavenworth on Forest Service roads and down into the Entiat valley at Ardenvoir. From there it was only about a mile up the Entiat highway to the start of the loop route at the Mud Creek road. After several miles this turns off on to FS 8410, which becomes two well-packed sandy tracks separated by weeds, suggesting how little traffic it gets. Then it begins to climb seriously, though not steeply, toward Slide Ridge, through open mountainside with snags from the huge Entiat Fire in the 1980's. The road winds and switchbacks for miles until it finally attains



the east side of the ridge, with great views down over lower Lake Chelan, Manson, and the town of Chelan.

The road follows the ridge for about ten miles, on both the east and west sides. There is little water along the ridge at least in August, and no established campsites, though there are several good possibilities if you are self-contained. So far, I had passed one pickup truck.

Finally the road drops again to 1900 feet near Lake Chelan at Twenty Five Mile Creek. I wasn't sure that I would find water at any of the campsites on the next ridge on the way to Shady Pass, so I filled my water bag at Ramona Park Campground so that I had about a gallon.



The road coming up from the lake is paved up to this point. Just beyond the end of the pavement I passed a half-dozen late teens that had parked their van and unloaded a quad and a couple of dirt bikes (seemingly best sized for pre-teens). These intrepid youths were using these tools to stir up immense clouds of dust by going in circles. In respect to my air filter, I waited for a lull in their exertions to pass by, glad that they had selected this industry rather than pointlessly exploring the roads where I was heading.

I climbed again, now on Forest Service

5900, with more fine views down to Lake Chelan to the east, and finally arrived on top of the ridge at Grouse Mountain Campground. From here the road turned west along the ridge top, still climbing. Most of the timber here had been burned off, as on Slide Ridge. There were great views to north and south from several saddles along the way.



After about ten more miles I arrived at Junior Point, where a spur road leads to an old lookout location and a small campground at 6400 feet. The view was fantastic from the site I chose, looking east to Slide Ridge and on across eastern Washington. If it had not been for smoke coming down from fires in central BC, the Rockies in Idaho should have been visible too. There was no water here, so I was glad to have brought what I needed.

From the old lookout pad, I could see Lake Chelan up toward Stehekin, and a small portion of it far below a few miles to the east.



**Looking north from Junior Point**



**East from Junior Point, showing the road I came up on**



The next morning I continued west toward Shady Pass. Still lots of burned timber, but there was one entire mountainside where bark beetles had killed all of the trees the previous year, turning the mountain a bright purple-orange. Then a very long drop down countless switchbacks to reach the paved Entiat River Road. Continued down the winding highway almost thirty miles to the junction with the Columbia River, and then down US 97 to Wenatchee and back over US 2 and home.

**Northeast from Junior Point down to Lake Chelan,  
with the Sawtooth Wilderness beyond**