

The road less traveled; Article appeared in November issue of Oklahoma Living Magazine

Oklahoma's first ATV trail guide reveals 900,000 acres of adventure ready and waiting to renew your spirit

By Mary Logan Wolf

Drinking water? Check.

Gas can with extra gas? Check.

Tire repair kit? Check.

GPS or compass? You bet your life.

If you're planning an off-road adventure in Oklahoma, you're wise to go prepared. Not only is the state home to some of the best all-terrain riding in the central U.S.—over 900,000 acres—many regions are so blissfully remote that getting lost is not only expected, it's part of the fun.

Just ask Dave White. The Okmulgee resident and member of East Central Electric spent the past year astride his all terrain vehicle (ATV) researching, exploring and plotting GPS coordinates along thousands of miles of four-wheeler and dirt bike trails in Oklahoma. The result is the recently published *Oklahoma TrailGuide for ATV, Dirt Bike and Off-road Enthusiasts*, a comprehensive review of Oklahoma's premier riding destinations.

Like a treasure map, the guide offers rich rewards to ATV riders seeking solitude, rugged scenery, wildlife, or, for the more action oriented, a place to rev the engines and kick up some dirt. From the sandy swells of Beaver Dunes State Park to the timbered passage through Talimena State Park, White says Oklahoma is chock full of great rides that few people seem to know about.

"When I realized the number of opportunities there are in Oklahoma for ATVs, and the fact that so few people even realize these areas are here, frankly I was surprised," White says. "We have riding areas and trails that are every bit as challenging and scenic as those you'd find in Colorado or New Mexico."

A few of these trails get mention on the Web, but as White noted, the details for Oklahoma are spotty at best. The *TrailGuide* fills in the gap with easy to read maps, trail entry and exit points, ride distances, geographical points of interest, type of terrain guides, level of difficulty indicators, access fees, regulations, driving directions—everything a family needs to know before planning a trip. Because riders prefer the quickest, safest route to trails, the guide suggests convenient parking areas, camping sites, RV parks, and cabin rentals, most offering immediate on-trail access.

Particularly useful are the insider tips for each destination. For instance, don't expect to sleep much if you tent camp and ride at Lake Murray. The ATV action here goes on around the clock. Little Sahara tends to attract thrill seekers and isn't recommended for young or less experienced riders, while Cross Bar Ranch near Davis appeals to recreational riders who like to slow down and enjoy scenic, varied terrain.

For riders who want it all to themselves—we're talking thousands of acres of timbered mountains, chiseled canyons, waterfalls, river crossings, fishing holes, and abundant wildlife—southeast Oklahoma is Mecca. "The Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area and the Ouachita National Forest are about as good as it gets," White says.

ATV riders here can spend days, even weeks, exploring the primitive logging roads and secondary trails that weave through the nooks and crannies of the rugged mountains. "We're talking about an area that's over 1,000 square miles in Three Rivers alone," White says. "You can ride for days without covering the same trails or seeing a single soul. To me, this is the ultimate outdoor experience."

It's also a great place to get lost. When this happens, White's *TrailGuide* and a GPS system come in most handy. "All the primary logging roads are marked for GPS, plus we've marked certain scenic areas like the Devil's Backbone, Eagle's Bluff and Goat's Bluff Rapids," White says. "Riders can follow these GPS markers like cookie crumbs back to where they started."

If all else fails, White recommends old-fashioned common sense. "Always take the road most traveled," he says. Then again, when surrounded by such an alluring landscape, who's to say losing yourself isn't a great way to spend the day.

To purchase a copy of Oklahoma TrailGuide for ATV, Dirt Bike and Off-road Enthusiasts, check with your local ATV distributor or visit www.outbackguides.com.