

Missouri

The following is an excerpt from the article **The Road to Frankenstein: Riding the Big Muddy**, originally printed in the May 2008 issue. Tear it out and take it with you, or print the PDF version you can find at ridermagazine.com.

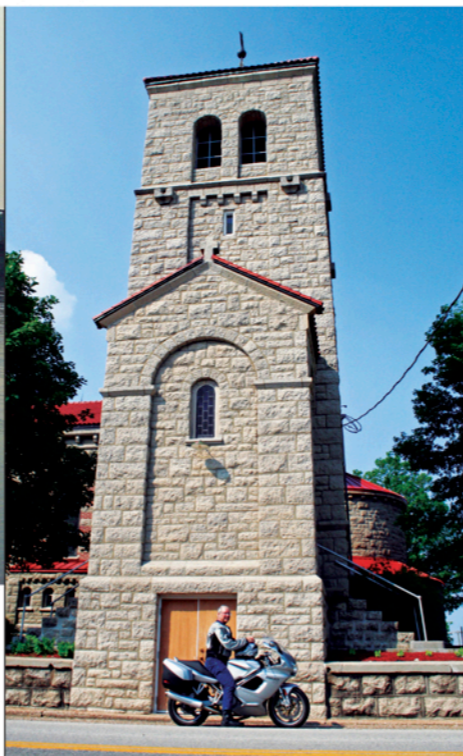
GREATROADS



The “Big Muddy” Missouri River flows at a rapid pace, seeking its junction with the Mississippi River just north of St. Louis.

The crack of the bat and the smell of yeast are never far away in St. Louis, a vibrant city—kingdom of baseball and beer. It’s home of the National League Cardinals and the historical site of the nation’s largest brewer, the Anheuser-Busch Brewery. This ride from St. Louis to Frankenstein is an easy escape from the metro area into a lightly populated rural setting with fun roads and little traffic. Wineries and German food are an added treat.

- Highway 94 first sweeps an area known as Weldon Spring, which includes two large tracts of woods, fields and ponds dedicated to outdoor recreation. The rolling two-lane soon becomes curvaceous. The Katy Trail, a biking and hiking path on an abandoned rail bed, parallels the highway in places.
- The historically German town of Hermann is 35 miles west, an enclave of good food and locally produced wines. The roads on this trip (sometimes in the hills atop the river bluffs, sometimes in the floodplains in the valley) alternately twist and turn, then break out in fast straightaways. The scenery varies from pastoral (hilltop pastures, sprawling corn fields) to forest in places where trees seem to press both sides of the road.



Catholic churches like this one in Frankenstein were the lifeblood of the new “Rhineland” stretching west from St. Louis.

- I take Highway 19 south of Hermann a short distance, then turn west onto Highway 100. Some 15 miles of undulating riding lay ahead before the road dips into the floodplain for a 10-mile stretch of mostly straight riding that allows “airing-out” a warm engine. An aging powerplant rising out of the cornfields here looks like a great setting for a sci-fi flick.



The historical proportions of some of the buildings in the new “Rhineland” of Missouri are grist for visiting history buffs.

- Highway 19 climbs back up into the hills before coming to a junction with County Road C. Turning onto “C” is my favorite part of the trip, narrow blacktop with awesome twisties and hill country scenery. There is a second-gear turn at the corner of the Frankenstein Catholic Church. It takes but a moment to ride through a town that time seems to have forgotten. Only about 30 people live here. The town has nothing to do with the monster of Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel, or Universal Studio’s 1931 black-and-white film. Rather, the town of Frankenstein is named after an early settler.



The road to Frankenstein and its winding tarmac is a favorite with Missouri riders.

- I cross the river on Highway 54 at Jefferson City (back to the north side of the river) then quickly turn east on Highway 94. Much of the road is in the floodplain, but there is a great eight-mile stretch of hill riding near the little town of Portland. It is 50 miles back to the junction with Highway 19 where I previously made the turn to Hermann; I stay on 94 to return to St. Louis...probably with a nice unopened bottle of wine in the saddlebags from Missouri’s Rhineland.

Other Great Roads

- The Missouri Division of Tourism also recommends Missouri Highway 21, which is a hilly and curvy road through the scenic Ozark Hills. It passes several popular parks, including Elephant Rock State Park near Bellview.
- A stretch of the famous Old Route 66 (now Interstate 44) runs through Missouri. A popular stopping point is the community of Devil’s Elbow on the Big Piney River, where visitors can cross the historic Devil’s Elbow Bridge. 39