

The Great Western Trail: A Utopia for ATV Trail Riding

The American West was founded on dreams and the pioneer spirit. "Go West young man!" was the battle cry of thousands of individuals looking for adventure and a fresh start. In time, the way west had been criss-crossed by dozens of trails and passages to reach the Pacific Coast. In time, those trails would become a means for commerce as well as leisure travel and the means of transportation would be as varied as the people that used the trails.

The same spirit lives on today in the American West. People sitting around campfires still have dreams and the drive to see them happen. One such group of people is the founders of the Great Western Trail. The GWT isn't a route for a modern day cattle drive, the Great Western Trail is an idea in the making for a multi-purpose outdoor vehicle trail that runs from Canada to Mexico. The trail won't just be for ATV and dirt bikes, the goal is to make the GWT available to hikers, horseback riders, skiers, snowmobilers and many other outdoor enthusiasts.

Putting together a trail of this magnitude is going to take a lot of work and forethought. You can imagine all the precautions and planning that needs to be in place for these motorized and non-motorized trails to work together. Overall the "trail" will most likely be a collection of trails running parallel to one another. You can't have a horse and an ATV running on the same trail without some obvious safety issues. There are also some areas that motorized vehicles will not be allowed to go, but a horse or a hiker would.

The GWT started back in 1985 and so far there are several hundred miles in Utah and Arizona. Like the Eastern and Western railroads of the old west, the goal is to have both the Northern and Southern sections of the trail meet in the middle, completing a way from Canada to Mexico. Portions of the route are already created and when the whole trail is finished it will cover a total of 4,455 miles through Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. Much of this route is mapped out over some of the most beautiful scenery the United States has to offer. The landscape of the American West is gorgeous enough from a car or the back of a motorcycle, but riding through miles of Arizona desert or the stunning Utah rock formations on an ATV can be downright spectacular.

The builders of the GWT hope to utilize trails and roads already existing along the route. By doing this it cuts down on any new construction that needs to be done. The Great Western Trail is also making use of much of the public lands along the way, especially the land deep in the center of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. The trail will also utilize a few National Forests such as Bitterroot and Salmon National Forests and a portion that follows the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Still other sections of the trail will wind along the western portion of Yellowstone National Park.

Eventually when the trail is finished, you will be able to spend a week or so riding the trail and have the ATV trail riding experience of a lifetime.

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