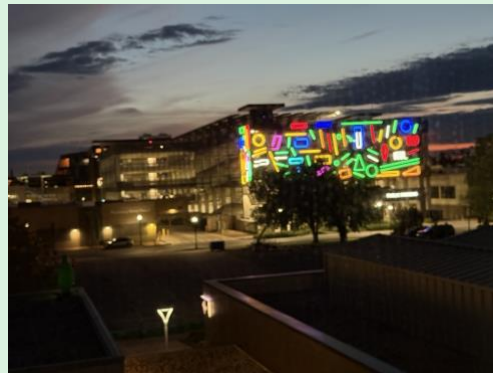


GRAVEL ROAD RIDING NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

APRIL 2026

Bentonville is located approximately 216 miles west of Little Rock, Arkansas, about 114 miles east of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and roughly 61 miles south of Joplin, Missouri, in the heart of northwest Arkansas (NWA).

Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) serves the region, providing access to Bentonville, Fayetteville, Bella Vista, Rogers, Springdale, and surrounding communities.



Bentonville has become a premier hub for **mountain biking** and



gravel cycling in northwest Arkansas. Mountain biking took off in earnest here around **2007**, when the first singletrack trails opened on the north end of town. Today, the area boasts an extensive network of trails using classic mountain biking lingo—

flowy descents, techy rock gardens, berms, jumps, and more.

Popular mountain bike trails include **Slaughter Pen** (the iconic starter system with 30+ miles of diverse riding), **Boneyard**, and **Handcut Hollow Loop**. Slaughter Pen, where it all began in the late 2000's, is located just minutes west/northwest of downtown Bentonville, right near [Wright's Barbeque](#) — a must-stop for post-ride barbecue. The area also hosts exciting races throughout the year, including enduro events at Slaughter Pen during the Bentonville Bike Fest and the Life Time Big Sugar Classic (which links directly into Slaughter Pen trails).



Gravel cycling has also exploded in popularity here, turning the region into a true mecca for gravel riders. Northwest Arkansas offers

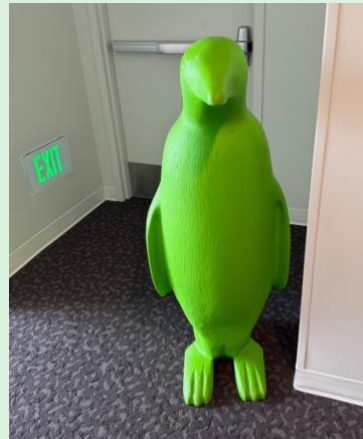


hundreds of miles of quiet, scenic gravel roads winding through the Ozark hills—perfect for adventure rides with rolling terrain, minimal traffic, and stunning views. Major gravel races like the Big Sugar Gravel add even more energy to the scene.

Gravel cycling is exactly what brought me to Northwest Arkansas. I registered for [Trek Travel's](#) five-day gravel riding trip, eager to experience the legendary roads I'd heard so much about. My preparation wasn't ideal — winter rain at home made it difficult to get consistent training miles in. Even so, the trip became a memorable cycling adventure. The gravel riding was outstanding; though demanding, tough, and often exhausting, it was incredibly rewarding.

Whether you're into flowy singletrack, big mountain bike days, or long gravel explorations, Bentonville and the surrounding area deliver good options for all levels.

We stayed at the [21c Museum Hotel Bentonville](#) (right in the heart of downtown), a one-of-a-kind art-filled hotel famous for its flock of bright green penguins scattered throughout the property. These playful sculptures, created by the Italian collective Cracking Art Group, are made from recycled plastic. Each 21c hotel has its own signature color. Bentonville's vibrant green was chosen by public vote. The penguins "migrate" around the hotel, popping up in hallways, on rooftops, in elevators, and even outside guest rooms.



One of them even joined us for a pre-ride breakfast at the [Hive Restaurant](#) in the hotel, standing guard at our table like it was part of the group. A fellow Trek rider joked that he was going to buy one and move it around his house for fun. I loved the idea so much that I bought my own penguin to take home and

move it around. Side note: breakfast quickly became one of my favorite daily social highlights of the trip.



1962 Cadillac Fleetwood Limousine known as “**Making Change**” outside 21C Hotel

Just steps from the hotel is [Bentonville’s historic Town Square](#), the vibrant heart of downtown. Surrounded by boutique shops, restaurants, public art, and weekly events like the farmers market, it’s the perfect spot to relax, people-watch, or grab a coffee.



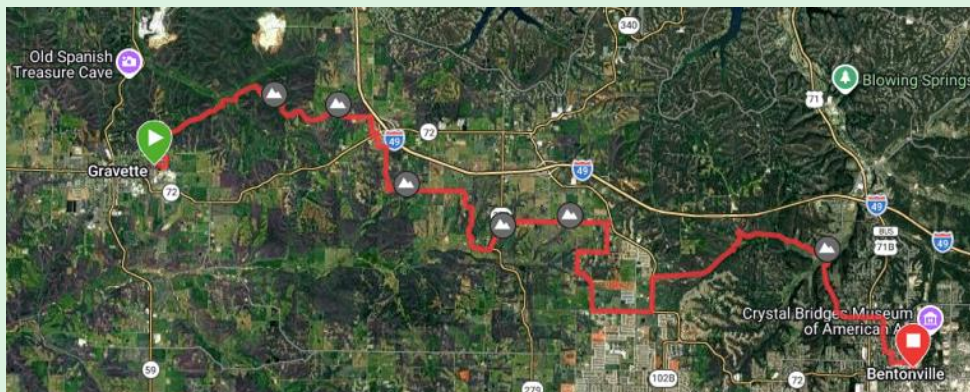
We also enjoyed drinks with panoramic views at [Tower Bar](#), located on the sixth floor of The Momentary (a contemporary art space and cultural hub). The elevated setting offers stunning 360-degree vistas of Bentonville—ideal for sunset cocktails.

For easy exploration, the **Razorback Greenway** runs right through town, providing a well maintained paved trail for walking, running, or cycling that connects Bentonville to nearby communities.

The real adventure began when we all met in the lobby to get ready for our rides. Over the next five days, our Trek Travel guides took us on a variety of gravel routes that showcased the best of Northwest Arkansas: rolling Ozark hills, quiet country roads, punchy climbs, and fast, flowy descents. Each day had its own personality and difficulty.

Below you'll find a daily breakdown with maps, route details, and highlights so you can see exactly where we rode:

DAY 1 – GRAVETTE TO BENTONVILLE



Map Route's source: Google map - Garmin Edge 850, Software 30.18
22.27 miles, Total ascent 1,296 feet

Warm-up & Introduction:



We started the week with a van ride to a park in Gravette, just northwest of Bentonville. There, our guides had prepared a welcoming picnic, fitted us to the bikes we'd be riding on all week, and gave us a quick orientation. They described the day's route as the perfect

introduction to the surfaces and elevations we'd encounter throughout the trip.

The ride featured six solid climbs and was roughly 60% on quiet gravel country roads with a lot of cows. It was hot, humid, and windy (gusts up to 18 mph), so it definitely woke up the legs! Still, it was a beautiful way to ease into Northwest Arkansas gravel riding.



That evening, we enjoyed a relaxed social hour followed by a great group dinner at the Hive, the perfect way to end the first day and get to know everyone better.

About fifteen minutes into the ride the sky opened up. Rain started lightly, then came down harder as the wind picked up. Soon we had



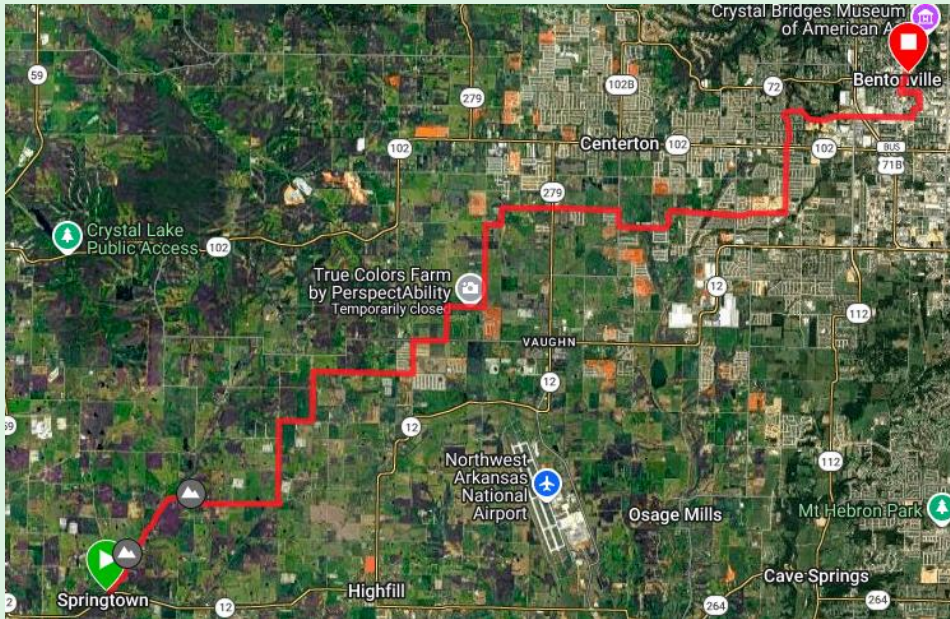
hail, thunder, and lightning all around us. By the time I reached the planned snack stop, our guides had already made the call to end the ride for safety.

Even with the shortened day, I managed to ride about 90% on gravel and

10% on pavement. The scenery was very similar to Day 1 - peaceful farms, rolling pastures, and plenty of cows and some horses watching us roll by.

With the rest of the afternoon free, we avoided the lingering severe weather (which came and went for a couple of hours) and explored downtown Bentonville instead. That evening we had dinner at a local favorite ([Oven and Tap](#)) known for its excellent wood-fired pizzas. The dinner turned out to be the perfect way to refuel and relax after a wild weather day.

DAY 3 – SPRINGTOWN - BENTONVILLE



Map Route's source: Google map - Garmin Edge 850, Software 30.18
23.05 miles, Total ascent 1,201 feet

Rolling Hills & The Ledger

I started my Day 3 ride southwest of Bentonville in Springtown. The



route kicked off with a surprisingly challenging ascent right from the start, followed by a fun mix of rolling hills. This day had more pavement than previous ones about 65%, but still, plenty of gravel. The scenery was classic

NWA: peaceful farms, grazing cows, and a couple of large poultry farms.



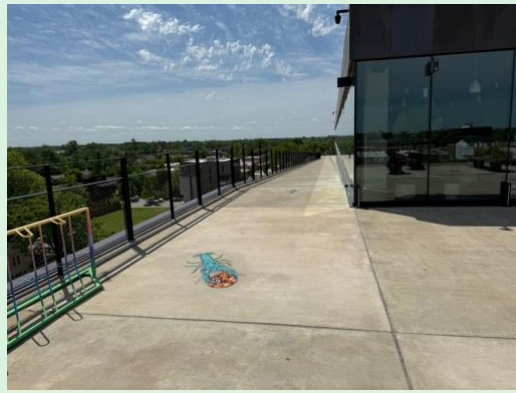
Poultry Farms



Horse Stable

We regrouped in downtown Bentonville for lunch at [the Meteor Café in Bentonville](#), then finished the rest of the route. After wrapping up, I took a fun detour to [The Ledger](#), a unique downtown building with ramps that let you walk or ride all the way to the top floor. I walked up several times and rode my bike to the rooftop — the panoramic view of Bentonville was worth every lap.

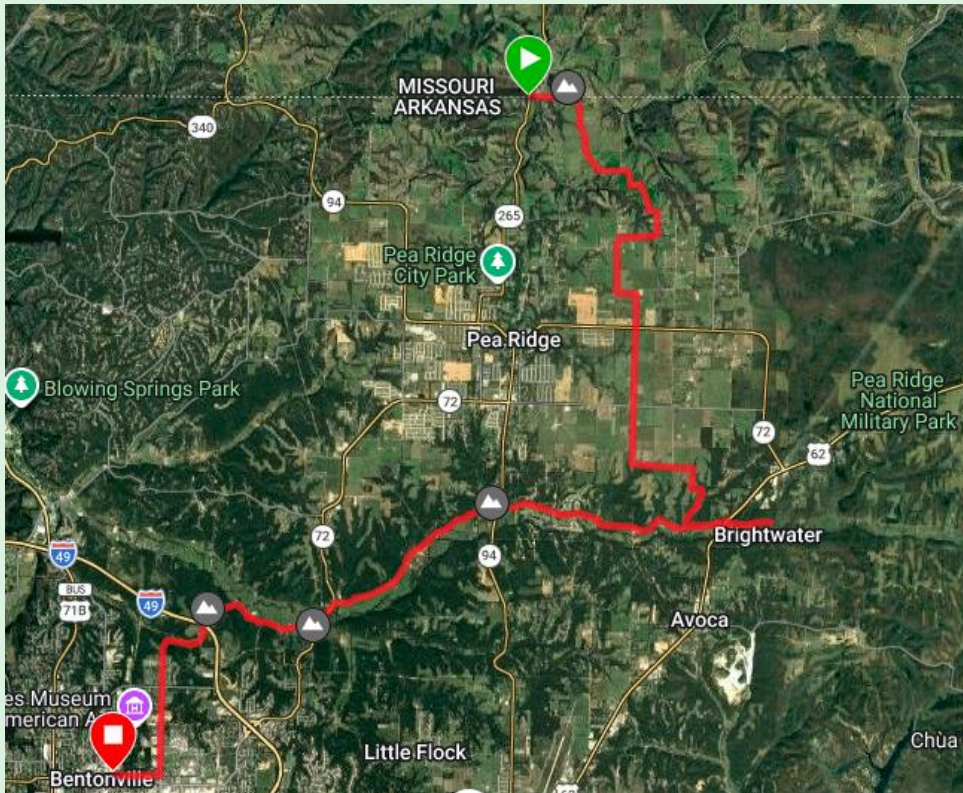




Pictures of The Ledger Building

With no pre-planned group activity that evening, I enjoyed a relaxed night to rest and recover.

DAY 4 – RED MULE BARN, MO – LITTLE SUGAR CREEK TRENCHES - BENTONVILLE



Map Route's source: Google map - Garmin Edge 850, Software 30.18
20.67 miles, Total ascent 1,119 feet

Missouri Border Ride & Historic Lunch

I started my Day 4 ride in Missouri at the Red Mule Barn, just across the state border from Arkansas.

The route delivered four pretty tough climbs and was about 70% gravel.

The scenery was some of the best of the week - panoramic rolling hills, sprawling farms, and plenty of cows. I even spotted a few Zebu/American Brahman cows, which was a real treat!



Looking towards Missouri



Zebu/American Brahman Cows in a pasture



We stopped for lunch at [Pea Ridge National Military Park](#), the site of the largest Civil War battle west of the Mississippi River. The Union victory here in 1862 helped decide the fate of Missouri and changed the course of the war in the Trans-Mississippi theater. Eating lunch in

the actual trenches where the fighting took place was a powerful and unforgettable experience.



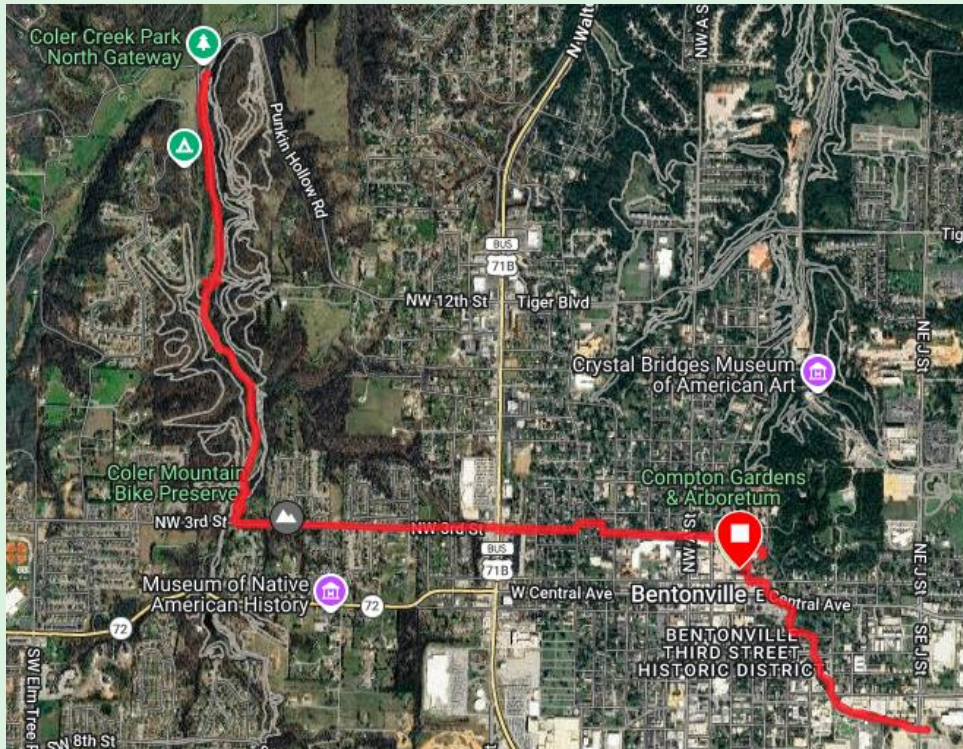
The route brought us back near Bentonville by the NE J Street trailhead, where you can easily access **Handcut Hollow** and, a little closer to town, **Slaughter Pen**. The final climbs back into Bentonville were absolutely brutal for me — my legs were screaming by the end! (I walked most of the last climb.)



That evening we enjoyed our final group social hour followed by an outstanding dinner at [Conifer](#), a farm-to-table restaurant in downtown Bentonville. Many riders were already opting to skip Day 5

due to early flights home, so the dinner had a bittersweet “last hurrah” feel.

DAY 5 – COLER MOUNTAIN BIKE PERSERVE – RAZORBACK GREENWAY



Map Route's source: Google map - Garmin Edge 850, Software 30.18
9.12 miles, Total ascent 361 feet

A Personal Farewell Ride

For the final day, I decided to skip the organized group route.



Instead, I headed to [Coler Mountain Bike Preserve](#), the spot we had planned to visit on Day 2 before the thunderstorms cut that ride short and have coffee, only accessible by walking or by biking.

I went by **Airship Coffee** for a relaxed cup of coffee and spent some time on the unique **Singing Bridge**. It's actually a sound art

installation by artist Craig Colorusso — solar-powered speakers hidden in the bridge play gentle, ambient music (composed for guitar and clarinet) that creates an ethereal, almost magical atmosphere as you cross. It was fascinating and added a



peaceful, memorable touch to the morning. After enjoying the views,

I rode a few easy miles on the Razorback Greenway before heading back to the hotel.



Later, I said my goodbyes to the Trek Travel guides and the riders who were

finishing up. It was a relaxed but bittersweet end to an unforgettable week.

FINAL THOUGHTS

What started as “just a gravel trip” became so much more, a week of challenging rides, great company, unexpected adventures, and a deeper appreciation for Northwest Arkansas. I met some interesting guys from across the country, and the camaraderie added a lot to the experience.



Bentonville and the surrounding area deliver good riding in a welcoming, vibrant setting. If you love gravel (or mountain biking), put this place on your list. You won't regret it.

I came home tired, a little sore, one green penguin richer, and already thinking about my next cycling trip.