

Summer in the Mountains

JAMBOREE & RENDEZVOUS

Chrysler's Jeep/Eagle Division sponsors approximately 22 well-organized off-road trips each year from April to October. The Jeep Jamboree visits 18 states from Maine to California, always with the leadership of experienced guides. Trip fee is \$150 per person. For information, call (800) JEEP EAGLE.

Ford stages a smaller off-road series, usually in the West. The Ford Rendezvous will include at least two trips this summer. For information, call the Searchers 4WD club, at (303) 565-7530.



JEEPERS, CREEPERS

When crossing logs or large rocks, the challenge is to go slow, yet keep moving. Jeep Jamboree founder, Mark Smith, offers a trick for vehicles with manual transmissions: Creep along in first gear, 4WD low. If the engine stalls, start it again while still in gear. Torque created by the starter is enough to keep the vehicle inching over obstacles. In a second, the engine will catch. The starter won't be harmed. This technique won't work in vehicles that require the clutch to be depressed before start-up.

RUGGED MOUNTAIN BYWAYS *continued*

SUPERIOR 4-WHEELING THROUGH MICHIGAN

On Michigan's Upper Peninsula, proximity to Lake Superior gives storekeepers convenient, if uninspired, names for their businesses: Superior Gas, Superior Campground, Superior Herbs Everlasting. If four-wheelers see a Superior Grocery, they'll want to pick up cornflakes and milk to go with the "superior" blueberries that grow wild in the area.

The town of Paradise, about 70 miles east of Canada's Buttermilk and Searchmont ski areas and 120 miles north of Boyne Mountain, Michigan, marks the start and finish of a 40-mile jaunt through Lake Superior State Forest. This route was one of last year's Jeep Jamborees (see "Jamboree and Rendezvous," left).

On the Upper Peninsula (U.P.), a network of snowmobile trails is marked by triangular orange signs. The trails offer excellent off-road driving in the summer. Not far northeast of Paradise (population 462), Trail 2 leads into what bureaucrats call an "active timber-management area." Better known as a clear-cut, it's an ugly forest floor littered with the slash of jackpine trees.

Nevertheless, after loggers rake the tract with anchor chains from old ships, blueberry bushes sprout from the sandy soil. Between mid-July and September, a family of four can spend a day in a clear-cut and drive away with 10 to 15 gallons of big, fresh berries.

Heading south to Route 123, birch and beech trees create a canopy over the road. Here, as in much of the U.P., the trails are like long, level, lush-green hallways; narrow, fragrant and insulated; shadowy, serene and silent.

The trees occasionally open to views of some of the world's grandest water displays. Tahquamenon Falls, second-biggest waterfall east of the Mississippi next to Niagara Falls, crashes to earth near Paradise. Lake Superior shimmers like a giant mirror. From the U.P., three Great Lakes—Huron, Michigan and Superior—can be seen within an hour.

Off Maple Block Road, the trails are slices of sand-ridges elevated over the wetlands. Sandy soil calls for cautious driving. Particularly when it's dry, the sand may be so soft it offers no traction. On last fall's Jamboree trip, one savvy Jeepster "aired down" his tires to 15 pounds to broaden the vehicle's footprints on the sand.

Eastbound on Trail 16A, two sharp downhills

appear without much warning. They're beach escarpments left by erosion when Lake Superior receded to its present level during the Glacial Age. Each about 60 feet long, with a gradient of 30 percent, they represent what may be the day's greatest four-wheeling challenge.

The Whitefish Point Lighthouse, built in 1849, marks a course change for ships navigating Lake Superior's treacherous coastline. The lake's angry waters have swallowed up dozens of boats, including the Edmund Fitzgerald in 1975. Gordon Lightfoot's ominous ballad to the shipwreck drones inside the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum adjacent to the lighthouse.

If the trails still beckon, try the southwesterly route that includes 19, 20 and 4A. An earthen dam on the Shelldrake River accounts for some fine fishing.

Alternatively, Whitefish Point Road offers a paved straight shot south, through the old logging town of Shelldrake, past Superior Herbs Everlasting. Either way, drivers finish where we all want to end up—in Paradise.

For more information, contact the Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association, 618 Stephenson Ave., Iron Mountain, Michigan 49801; (800) 562-7134.

—Tom LaRocque



DANIEL MEARS

Wade bogs: The jeep trails on the Upper Peninsula are slices of sand over wetland.

