



RIDING THE DOTTED LINES

America's best off-road bike tours

By David M. Abramson

In *Blue Highways* William Least Heat Moon writes of the secondary roads that mapmakers once colored blue, the back roads where there is "a beckoning, a strangeness... where a man can lose himself." He leaves unmentioned the dotted lines drawn by county cartographers—the keys to old stagecoach routes, jeep trails, forest paths, and train beds—the byways that still transect rural and remote America. Now *those* are roads where a person can lose himself. Heading off the

pavement onto the dirt, gravel, scree, and brush opens a whole new world for cycle tourists. A world only recently made possible, or at least comfortable, by the introduction of off-road touring bikes.

The air in their fat tires relieves most joint jouncing, the straight handlebars make for easier leverage while climbing hills, and the tire treads generally grab anything worth rolling over. Add 40 pounds of food and supplies into panniers and a lightweight bivy sack on the rear rack, and an off-road bike will