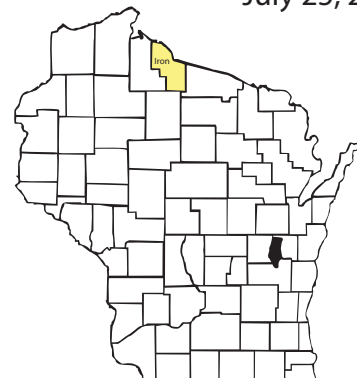


# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts



## Where 51 Ends And The Fun Begins *Good times roll on with Iron County ATV trails*

By Dick Ellis



Jenny Johnson of Milwaukee climbs on one of the Iron County ATV trail sand hills as other members of her group wait their turn below. Iron County's trail system is the largest in Wisconsin

Taking the payoff for throttling up their ATVs on the brink of the 20 foot pothole, an explosion of water and mud reached up to re-paint Tara Kandler and Jenny Johnson a beautiful chocolate brown. With 120 miles of pure Iron County dirt already in their wake and much of Wisconsin's largest trail system still sprawled ahead, the next rendezvous with a motorized mud bath was guaranteed to be looming somewhere close.

A long line of machines and riders, courtesy of the Hurley Chamber of

Commerce and Eagle All Sports, followed Johnson and Kandler into the water and motored on into the distance. Jessica Bolich, Executive Director of the Chamber, Jenni Kallas, Administrative Assistant for the Iron County Development Zone, Bill Thomas of Hurley, Larry Scheele of Minnesota, and my own group; Lori and Taylor Ellis and Mitch Groth of New Berlin took turns taking on each new over-sized puddle, or simply stopped to enjoy waterfalls, the Gile Flowage, winding creeks, or man-made luxuries built specifically to accommodate four-wheelers.

Squatting on the backside of the pothole, caked in my own trail riding badges of honor, I caught each ATV with the camera coming and going. It had been almost six hours since Iron County locals ... or is that locos ... Kallas and Bolich had ridden like wild women to, comparatively speaking, label this trail riding rookie a trail riding wimp.

"Hit those waterholes like you mean it!" Jenni Kallas voice had rang off the surrounding pines from somewhere behind me early in our trek. "Something's wrong if you're not soaking wet and muddy at the end of the day."

These Iron County versions of polite office executives should know. Iron County showcases the largest trail system in the state as "the ultimate ATV adventure". More than 200 miles of trails run through the county already boasting the most public property in Wisconsin. The Iron County trails, one-seventh of the state's system, are beautiful wilderness runs and open, Bolich said, throughout the four seasons.

"Our trails are not roads but actual marked, wilderness trails," she said. "There

are local roads and town roads that have been opened too to ATVs mainly so locals can access the trails. There are a lot of rental homes in Hurley, so when you come up to ride chances are you will be able to access the trails right from the house you're renting."

Early in our 120 mile journey which would ultimately take us through unbroken forests around the small mining towns of Oma, Montreal, Gile, Pence and Iron Belt, our group stopped playing in the mud long enough to admire Spring Camp Falls; one of approximately 60 waterfalls tucked among



Jessica Bolich, Executive Director of the Hurley Chamber of Commerce, stands in front of Spring Camp Falls during a 120 mile Iron County ATV run. Fifty to 60 waterfalls can be found within a 60 mile radius of Hurley.



Lori Ellis, the writer's wife, takes on a mud and water hole during a 120 mile Iron County trail ride. Jessica Bolich, Executive Director of the Hurley Chamber of Commerce, and Jenni Kallas, Administrative Assistant for the Iron County Development Zone, wait their turn in the shadows behind.

the northern forest within a 50 mile radius of Hurley. Had we chosen, the well-marked and mapped system would have taken us north to Lake Superior, or virtually anywhere in Iron County. That includes the Plummer Mine, an interpretive park which Bolich described as the last standing headframe mine in Wisconsin and "a reminder of our iron heritage."

"Any direction you go in Iron County you will be in the forest," Bolich said. "There are a lot of waterfalls close to Hurley. You need to be adventurous and go out and find them. The locals know about the falls. They're a local treasure."

Prior to an excellent courtesy lunch at Fat Boyz on Pine Lake in Oma where ATV fuel is also offered, we visited Schomberg Park. The Park was built in the center of Iron County specifically to accommodate the needs of campers with ATVs, including ATV wash, rest rooms and camp sites. "Anyone can camp there but it's geared more toward ATV riders," she said.

By day's end, it was evident that Iron County and Hurley take their ATV business to serious levels of all-out fun. In the 2010 Memorial Day Rally, Hurley fell just 101 riders short of

breaking the Guinness Book of world records for ATV riders in a parade currently standing (but not for long) at 1,632. Watch for details when Hurley will attempt to break the record again in the near future.

"We're going to try it again," Bolich said. "The record is held by Silver Bay, Minnesota. Anything with four wheels and a motor between your legs is considered an ATV (or UTV side by side). We get lots of tourism from the ATV industry. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger."

Although tending to the business of spotlighting the Hurley area keeps Bolich off the trails more than she would like, ATV trail riding is one of the hobbies her family does embrace. She grew up in neighboring Ironwood, left to attend college, married her high school sweetheart and was named executive director of the Hurley Chamber of Commerce four years ago.

"I don't get to ride the ATV trails very often, but it is one of the things my family does," she said. "Our kids are eight and four years old. We put a helmet on them and take them everywhere we go. They love it. It's not something you can do in the

city. They're out in the fresh air. Sure they'll get dirty...and then you wash up."

ATV riding, we can affirm, is family fun. If you are heading to Iron County with a large group of approximately 12 riders or more, Bolich recommends Eagle Bluff or Haven North Condominiums as among the best choices for lodging. Both are located on Lake Michele and offer kitchen, fireplace, and barbecue.

"A lot of the bigger groups ride during the day and barbecue at night," she said. "Bear Chasers also just reopened after a fire with cabins, restaurant and bar, gift shop and fuel. It's on Island Lake in the middle of nowhere. It's very unique and a real nice ride."

Unique and nice is what Iron County and Hurley are all about. Especially when it comes to ATVs and Wisconsin's largest

trail system.

"Like we say, Bolich said, 'It's where 51 ends and the fun begins.'" <sup>WO</sup>

*Special thanks to Jessica Bolich and Jenni Kallas. For more information, connect with the Hurley Chamber of Commerce at [www.hurleywi.com](http://www.hurleywi.com) or [info@hurleywi.com](mailto:info@hurleywi.com). Call 715-561-4334. Special thanks to Tim Scheele, owner, and Jerry LaPlant, Manager of Eagle All Sports for the use of ATVs. Connect at [www.eagleallsports.net](http://www.eagleallsports.net) or call 715-561-2593. Special thanks to Fat Boyz. Call 715-476-2204. For more information about Iron County, contact Iron County Development at [www.ironcountywi.com](http://www.ironcountywi.com) or 715.561.2922.*

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(Courtesy of Hurley Chamber of Commerce) The Plummer Mine headframe stands today as a reminder of our iron heritage. This is the last remaining headframe in the state of Wisconsin.