

13th
Annual
Fall
Crossfire
Tail of the
Dragon
GTG

October 3 - 7

2019

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Attendee
Package

THE CROSSFIRES AT THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON

The Dragon planning committee welcomes you to Fontana Village and the Tail of the Dragon.

What is the Tail of the Dragon?

The Road

As you drive north down US129 in North Carolina, you eventually cross the state line into Tennessee. The first 11 miles in Tennessee consists of 318 curves and is the actual “Tail of the Dragon”. This stretch of road consists of nothing but curves – no intersections, no driveways, no homes and no businesses – nothing but trees and curves.

Very little of our weekend is spent on the Dragon; this area consists of almost nothing BUT wonderful roads – the Dragon gets most of the press, but the fact is, most of us have a favorite road or drive up here and it often is not the Dragon.

The Weekend

When we speak of “The Tail of the Dragon”, most of us really mean *the whole weekend*. The Dragon consists of driving some wonderful, fun roads that feature more than exciting curves. We will drive routes that take us up above the clouds and down into forests with wonderful waterfalls and other such natural beauty that this area is known for.

The weekend also means spending time with a group of people who all have at least one thing in common: The appreciation of a unique car with an involved pedigree. We will be sharing food, fellowship, fun, inside jokes, and often, several of us end up fixing someone’s car in the lodge parking lot – it happens almost every time.

We present this attendee packet to help you prepare for and enjoy this weekend. If this is your first time here – YOU make these weekends! Thanks for coming!

An Introduction to the Tail of the Dragon

Going south in Tennessee, the last eleven miles of US129 snake thru the mountains along the Little Tennessee River. In these eleven miles, you will encounter 318 curves, some of them 15mph switchbacks. Up until the late 1990s, only locals and a few tourists (looking for Fontana Dam, no doubt) could be found on this stretch of US129. With its horribly tight curves, semi-truck drivers who know what the road is like tend to avoid it.

With the advent of the internet, tourists (mostly on two wheels) started to flock to the area. Given the increase in traffic and knowing that most of these drivers had no idea what they were encountering, Blount County responded by lowering the speed limit from 50 to 30mph. Over the years since, this stretch of road has actually become world famous.

Even at 30mph, the road can be challenging for anyone who does not understand WHICH curves are tight or decreasing in radius. And, many drivers seem to have a hard time staying in their lane. On average, if you do your homework (and not go by what you read in social media) you will find that no more than one person a year dies on this stretch of road. Usually, these individuals are sport bikers who become injured and perish from what are survivable injuries. The trouble is, in this area, cell phones do not work AND once you do get a call through, help can be close to an hour away. Once help arrives, the ride to the hospital will take considerable time. Fortunately, recently on weekends, Blount County volunteers have started to station themselves about halfway down the Dragon to be ready to respond.

Accidents of less severity occur as many as several times a weekend during the summer. A few times a year, cars are destroyed on the Dragon. Usually, the accident is caused by losing control in a curve and going off the side and down the slope towards the river – or off the other side of the road and into the rock wall that lines most of the Dragon.

If you read our “driving tips” you will see how we deal with the Dragon (and to a great extent, all other roads in this area). There is no reason to avoid the Dragon or to be afraid to travel it – as a passenger OR as a driver. We do have fun on our runs, but the chance of any serious (or even non-serious) accident is remote. In the years we have been coming here, no more than three Crossfires have been damaged on the Dragon.

Law enforcement is rather thick on the weekends, and they use unmarked cars and even motorcycles. Our medium groups often run speeds of over 50mph in places on the Dragon, and videos exist showing officers observing us, sometimes signaling us to slow down – but seldom stopping or citing us (the 30mph limit is more a tool used to keep us in line and safe than a strict rule). What they are watching for is those touching or going over the double yellow line (no matter the speed), tailgating, harassing slower drivers, blatant recklessness or troublemaking.

If you are in one of our groups, you have little to worry about as far as safety or citations – provided you keep our rules of the road in mind.

Schedule of Events

Please watch for announcements on the dry erase board in the lobby throughout the weekend

THURSDAY	
3:00 PM	Welcome and information table in the lodge lobby opens and will remain for the entire weekend. Stop by for name tags, run signup sheets and general information.
5:00 PM	Pizza's Sunset Cruise departs Lodge – returns 5:35 – 6 pm depending on your driving style <i>This run helps newcomers evaluate what group they should be in on other runs</i>
6:00 PM	Dinner on your own at Wildwood Grille or Tapoco Lodge (20 min drive)
9:00 PM	Short driver's meeting for Friday's events and runs
FRIDAY	
8:00 AM	Breakfast in the Lodge Restaurant (or grab and go from convenience store)
9:00 AM	Line up in front of Wildwood Grill for today's runs
9:30 AM	Depart in groups for today's runs
5:00 PM	Pizza's Sunset Cruise departs Lodge – returns 5:35 – 6 pm depending on your driving style <i>This run helps newcomers evaluate what group they should be in on other runs</i>
6:00 PM	Dinner on your own at Lodge restaurant, Wildwood Grille or Tapoco Lodge (20 min drive)
8:30 PM	"Radios and You" – an introduction to GMRS/FRS radios as we use them; including licensing issues.
9:00 PM	Driver's meeting – introduction to our gathering, presentation of run leaders and run descriptions, general information about the weekend's events
SATURDAY	
8:00 AM	Breakfast in the Lodge Restaurant (or grab and go from convenience store)
8:30 AM	Line up in front of Wildwood Grill to convoy to Fontana Dam
9:00 AM	Depart as one group to the Dam; photos
10:15 AM	Line up in groups for today's runs
10:30 AM	Depart in groups for today's runs
6 – 10 PM	Big gathering in the Chestnut Room for dinner. Admission is \$10 per person (CASH ONLY) for barbeque dinner by the "Crossfire Culinary Elves" <i>Raffle Prizes (purchase raffle tickets – CASH ONLY) after dinner</i>
SUNDAY	
8:00 AM	Breakfast in the Lodge Restaurant or caravan to Deal's Gap for breakfast and shopping
10:00 AM	Leave in groups from Deal's Gap for today's runs
10 AM – 2 PM	Depart from runs to head home, if leaving today
2 – 5 PM	Return to Lodge for informal "hang out" time

Each afternoon, around dinner time, signup sheets for the next day's runs will be placed on the reception table in the lodge lobby.

Route Descriptions

It is hard to determine in advance, what runs and routes will be offered, as this depends on what leaders we have, and what interest there is in the individual offerings. In any event, you can count on “Pizza’s Sunset Cruise”, “The Cherochala Skyway Run” and “Mark’s Mystery Tour” to be offered.

At the driver’s meetings each evening at 9pm, the routes will be discussed, and leaders of those routes introduced. There will be signup sheets for the runs in the Lodge Lobby on the welcome table. In the morning, if interest dictates, last minute adjustments may be made to what runs are offered.

If you have never attended before, it almost does not matter what route you take – only the class or style you are in matters. The driving class describes how you drive your car; the route is just the specific roads, restaurants and attractions you will see. If you have not been here before, you will find that all routes are fun, relaxing, exciting, pretty, etc. See the very last section of this handout for an explanation of driving class or style. You do not want to be in a group that does not match your speed and style. Driving class will be listed on [signup sheets](#).

NOTE TO OUR “TOP DOWN” DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS: Be aware that some roads pass elevations that mean a temperature drop of up to 15 degrees from the Lodge parking lot.

What follows are our Usual Runs

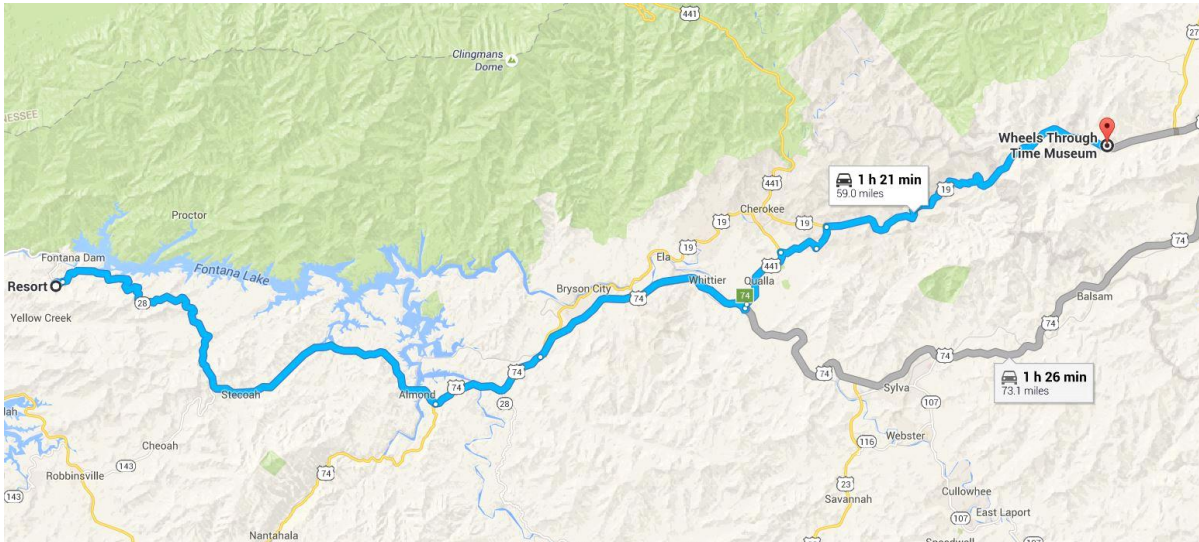
Each of these is usually offered at least once in the three-day event

Pizza’a Sunset Cruise

On Thursday and Friday evening, this little 35- to 60-minute ride can help you determine what group you want to be with. It starts off ‘tourist class’ and becomes a moderate to almost pants-on-fire run. If you keep up the whole time, you would keep up with any moderate run. If this turns out not to be your idea of a good time, consider a “Tourist Class” run the next day. You can’t get lost or left behind – it is a short, easy route with ONLY right hand turns at every intersection. *Take a place near the back and use it to gauge yourself.*

I plan to offer this Thursday and Friday at 5pm, with departure maybe up to 20 minutes late, as this run can be hard to organize since we are all tired on Friday evening. ---- Mark, Pizzaguy

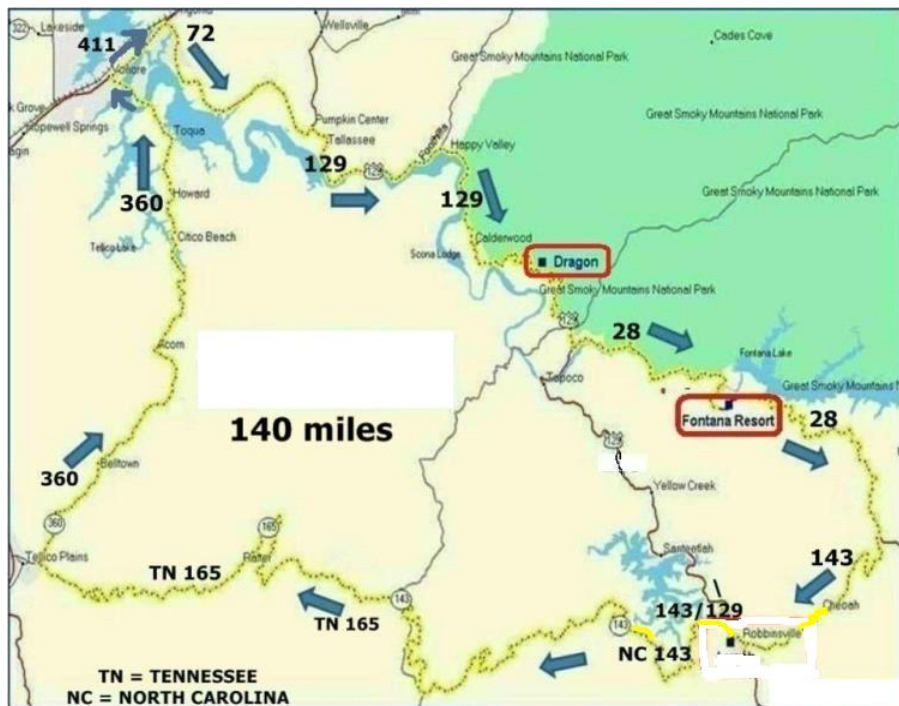
Wheels thru Time



This is a 120-mile round trip that is somewhat off the beaten path of the Bridal Veil run. To visit this unusual attraction, we drive directly to it and then back to the lodge. With 2 to 3 hours spent in the museum and a lunch stop, this will be a 5 to 6 hour trip. Totally worth it!

<http://www.wheelsthroughtime.com/>

The Cherochala Skyway



Pizzaguy's favorite – This is a great first timer's run. It features many easy gas stops, elevations and views from a mile above sea level, stops near a grocery store, pharmacy and liquor store. We either visit Bald River Falls OR the Lost Sea adventure. The day ends with a run thru the Tail of the Dragon and visit to the tourist mecca known as Deal's Gap.

This is a 146- to 155-mile run and takes us about five and a half hours. Plan to arrive back at the lodge by 4:00-4:30pm.

<http://www.cherohala.com/>

<http://www.dealsgap.com/>

The Franklin Run



Just a good, fun run. Lots of curves and pretty views, but only on Wayah Road do we see any elevation –and the view is blocked by the forest. Franklin, NC has everything you need if you forgot anything. **IF you put Franklin into your GPS, make sure you put Franklin North Carolina in it, NOT Franklin, Tennessee.**

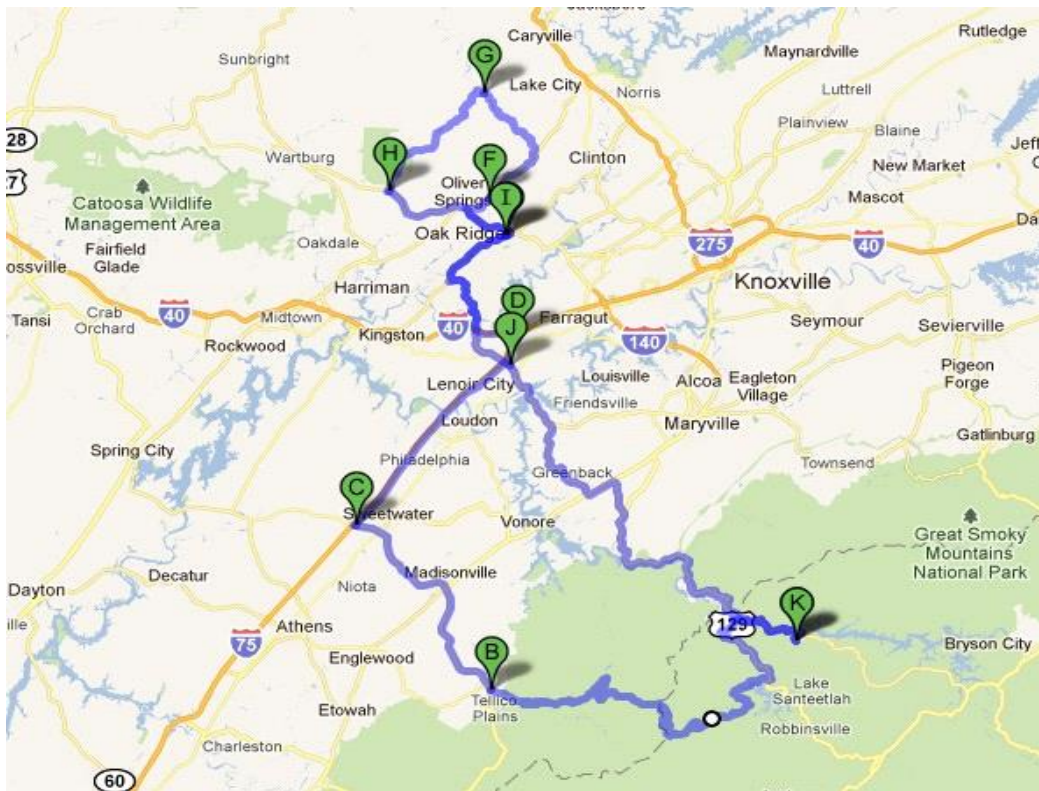
(The diagram shows a detour onto NC143 and thru the Joyce Kilmer forest – with the recent pavement breakups in the park; consider staying on US29 after Robbinsville.)

This is a 121-mile run that can take up to six hours. When you arrive at Deal’s Gap, you have the option of running up the Dragon and back before going back to the Lodge. This little detour will cost you 35 to 90 minutes, depending on how you drive the Dragon.

<http://www.motorcycleroads.com/75/420/North-Carolina/The-Hellbender-28.html>

<http://moonshiner28.com> (The last 28 or so miles of NC28 near the lodge is known as Hellbender, but as this website implies – many call the whole thing Moonshiner. At the lodge, many refer to US28 in front of the lodge from Deal’s Gap to Fontana dam (about 11 miles) as Hellbender and the rest of ’28 from the Dam to the Georgia state line as Moonshiner.

Devil’s Triangle Run



This is a LONG, hard run. A favorite of the hard-driving “Pants on Fire” group, this one takes even them as much as six hours. Mark, Pizzaguy, offers a shorter “Devil’s Run” that does not include the Cherohala but instead goes up thru the Dragon and returns thru the Dragon. The Legs K to B to C to J are not included in his version and are replaced with a drive directly from K to J. It is still almost a five-hour run at a more moderate pace; this includes a lunch stop and a few scenic view stops as well. This is often Pizza’s Sunday offering.

The actual Triangle is not nearly as intense (at moderate speeds) as the website implies.

<http://devilstriangletn.com/>

Why Are People Taking Pictures of Me?

Some tourists become upset when they pass photographers on the Dragon and other roads in the area, but this is all part of the fun. You can order high-resolution photographs of your car as a souvenir of the weekend. The major photographers are listed here; note that you can search their sites by date and approximate time. Killboy and US129 Photos usually also subdivide the photos into folders that contain ONLY Crossfire photos – so finding yours can be quite easy. If we have enough cars and make enough runs past the photographers, special offers will show up on the sites below targeting our group – watch for them!

<http://www.killboy.com/>

<http://www.129photos.com/>

http://129slayer.com/129Slayer/129_Slayer_The_Dragon_Photo_Specialist_on_US_129.html

Driving Tips

Do not get the idea that this is a road race or that we are a bunch of crazy speeders. What follows are tips and pointers from other car clubs, veteran Crossfire attendees and locals including “Killboy”, (the original Dragon photographer, Daryl Cannon), as well as the Blount County Rescue Squad. Fact is, this area attracts tons of people and some drivers are a bit ‘out there’. It would be irresponsible of us to not prepare for our drives. So many people say, *“I wish someone had mentioned that to me before we set out....”* Well, we are about to *“mention that”*.

1) **Lights on.** There are two major reasons for this:

A) On the Dragon and various other roads, you will encounter high-speed traffic, and they really need all the warning you can give them that you exist. Since we all KNOW they come here in droves, let’s give them what help we can so that all of our cars make it home without incident.

B) Having all lights on helps people to know we are a group, and most tend to NOT want to get in line with us unless they have no choice. The point – when people see a line of cars coming, they get impatient and tend to dart out and either get in line with us OR they try to dart across traffic – causing hazards for all. With lights on, they see the group and tend to stay put. Yes, it does often work.

2) **Check your ego at the Lodge door when we leave for a run.** We can all admit it – it is easy to get carried away.

If you must keep crossing the center line, if you are braking really hard and flooring it to keep up, if you are hitting gravel in curves, if you are thinking, “I don’t feel safe” – you are **outside of your comfort zone**. This is because you are violating a cardinal rule: DO NOT TRY TO KEEP UP BECAUSE YOU FEEL EMBARRASSED NOT TO. We ALL respect the drivers who realize this and fall back – fear not, ALL OF US will wait for you. We may run 20 miles ahead and sit for ½ hour, but we WILL wait for you. Do not feel bad, we will be yakking, talking about our cars and socializing when you get there. The drivers who show up and overdo it do not impress us, we can

tell you are struggling, this is no secret and we are waiting for you to be an adult and radio us, “Hey, I’m falling back...” But it is YOUR decision. Please don’t wreck your car or hurt yourself. We will be waiting up ahead somewhere for you.

3) **Be a part of the group.** Stay with the group. I know that this will sound like I am contradicting point 2), but I’m really not. We don’t want tailgating, but if you are ¼ mile from the car ahead of you, you are leading your own group. Those behind you get REALLY irritated, as they feel like they are no longer part of the fun “up front”. If you tend to fall back or are just not comfortable with the pace, pull over.

You will probably have others pull in behind you who are also not comfortable with the group speed, but they won’t do it unless an example is shown to them. Be the example! There is NO reason to spend your vacation stressed out. After everyone passes, take up the tail. If you fall behind, we will be waiting for you at the next turnoff, intersection, gas station or whatever. Again, we do not leave people behind.

3) **Stay off the yellow line.** Stay completely away from it. If an accident occurs, in the eyes of the law, someone over the line is MORE at fault than the other guy, even if the other guy was speeding. I cannot stress this enough – if you are driving on or crossing the center line, you are a danger to others. ***If you kill a biker because you were over the line, even if he came around a bend at 85mph, it is ALL your liability.*** If some biker or driver in another group says something to you – we will not defend you, we will side with them. What you are doing is a sign that you are driving too fast for your skill and confidence level. In the eyes of others, you are making yourself and the rest of us look bad.

4) **You don’t need your brakes as much as you think you do.** And the brake pedal can cost you your car or even injury. If you are in a curve and you perceive you are going too fast, remember that your car can’t go as fast in a curve with the brake applied as it can without the brake applied. If you panic and hit the brakes and you ARE a bit too fast, you WILL lose control. If the guy ahead of you is going along fine without his brakes, you can too.

5) **Don’t drop your wheels into the roadside gravel.** It is another sign you are overdoing it. Also, it creates a gravel hazard for bikes, in the worst possible places – curves. I should mention that some of us have cracked wheels by doing this when we hit broken pavement – that means an unrepairable flat tire.

6) **You need a radio.** Many of us have extras, so accept the offer or ask around for one. PLEASE remember to return it at the end of the run so it can be charged overnight! Radios really help, they keep us together, allow for “I’m dropping back”, “I need a bathroom stop” and “Whoa, where is the next gas station?” messages to the leader. Again – for not only YOUR enjoyment, but that of others, please accept the offer of a radio.

7) **If someone pulls over for your group** and lets you by on the Dragon or wherever, WAVE to them and smile. Honk the horn if you can’t get the window down in time, but SMILE so they know you appreciate what they did. They have no legal obligation to pull over. Also, this tells them that we do NOT think we own the road, which promotes goodwill with others, including the locals.

8) **Two things ruin the weekend for some attendees** and we have heard two complaints several times:

1) *"I felt left out when at the lodge or in the restaurants."* Those of us who lead and coordinate this event have talked about this and want to help. Keep in mind that some of us have been friends for ten years – we don't mean to be rude, it's just that we only see one another twice a year! Please stick around and join the conversations.

2) *They hated the runs because it turned into 5 hours of driving too fast on roads they have never been on.* If you choose to go with a 'non-tourist class' group, remember that **you made the call**. THIS is why "Pizza's Sunset Cruise" will now occur on Thursday and Friday (and maybe Saturday) evening. See the details in "Route Descriptions". You can use this ride to determine what group you want to be in – that is what it is for. And in any event, if a group is too fast for you, fall back and they will periodically wait for you along the way – no problem; we do not leave people behind.

Helpful Hints

1) **Radios** – We use radios on the runs to keep up with traffic, hazards, turns, restroom and gas stops, etc. TRUST US, having a radio makes ALL the difference. We know that you don't see the need, but you WILL see the need when you get here.

The top choice is the Midland MXT-105 (available from Lowe online, Amazon, etc.). This will set you back around \$110 with tax. It comes as a complete kit, has all you need, never needs batteries, easy to use, no odd and stupid options that make using it so hard that you get mad and throw it out the window, or need to ask someone how to program it.

It's also TINY and comes with double-sided tape to mount it in the car as you can see.....



If you think that the MXT-105 is too expensive, just wait till you see how well it works. One thing, in Roadsters with the top down, the speaker is just too weak, so add an external speaker (you can buy them at truck stops, get a "CB" or "Truckers" external speaker with the 1/8" (3.5mm) plug). If you have an aftermarket sound system in the car, you can get a jumper cable to plug it into the AM/FM's AUX jack and have six speakers and 70 watts of audio to hear us with!

Or.....

You need not spend a lot of money; you can find a set of two radios (you need only one, but bring the second one to loan to someone who needs it!) for as little as \$60. Look for an FRS radio OR an FRS/GMRS radio of 14 or 22 channels. Avoid the really cheap ones that sell for under \$40.

Please be aware that some retailers on eBay and Amazon are selling export radios with channel plans that do not line up with domestic channels or rules – not only are these illegal to buy, they are worthless as you won't be talking to us!

Any radio you find at the links below would work – the more expensive will have better audio and maybe a bit more range – but from car to car on a drive, all will do the job:

<http://www.walmart.com/ip/Motorola-MT350R-35-Mile-Range-Talkabout-2-Way-Radios-Pair/20595721>

<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/telephones-communications/two-way-radios/abcat0804000.c?id=abcat0804000>

What EVER battery(s) the radio uses, **bring spares**. You can buy batteries when you get to the Dragon, but prices in a tourist area make that unattractive.

2) Plan to arrive at Fontana Village while it's still daylight . . . The roads become challenging and stressful after dark . . .

3) Fuel up **BEFORE** you get to the Lodge so you arrive at the with a near-full tank of fuel.

4) There may not be a refrigerator in your room, so bring along appropriate coolers. FREE ice machines are in the main lodge and buildings.

5) Bring a good flashlight with fresh batteries. The grounds are VERY dark at night and you'll be glad you have a flashlight for walking to and from the main lodge building.

6) Wi-Fi is active ONLY in the area of the main lodge building . . . and don't count on having any reliable cell phone service anywhere on the Fontana property or in the surrounding areas. Cell phone service IS available in the lobby area of the main lodge.

Saturday Evening Dinner

This year, we will do something not done since the fall of 2010 – we will hold a “cookout style” dinner in the “Chestnut Room”. This is the ‘old hospital’ on the property. We have an all-new group of volunteer “Crossfire Dinner Elves” that are going to volunteer to provide us with dinner on Saturday.

Cost for this dinner will be \$10 per person, payable in cash at the door. Please be prepared with some extra cash for raffle tickets, as we will be raffling off prizes after dinner. You may be surprised as what some of the prizes are!

Liquor control policy in the Chestnut room is not the same as the main property – alcoholic beverages may be brought in and consumed at will.

Driver's Meeting Notice

Please make plans to attend our driver's meeting on Thursday and Friday at 9pm in the Lodge (exact location will be on the dry erase board).

We will take only as much time as is necessary to:

- Greet and welcome everyone, introduce ourselves
- Make our last-minute event announcements
- Describe our selection of routes for the following day
- Introduce our Route Leaders
- Answer a few questions

We will aim for no more than 30 or 40 minutes, and will then dismiss so that our attendees can congregate in and around the lodge to see and talk to old friends, make new friends and discuss whatever it is we spend our weekends talking about! This can be a good time to seek out the leader of the route you'd like to go on and discuss the events planned for the following day – and ask any lingering questions of your (or any of the) leaders.

DRIVING CLASS OR STYLE	
TOURIST	A relaxing speed limit drive - even the driver can enjoy the scenery
COMMON	Tourist class with occasional bursts of speed, possibly fast in curves. Take a place back from the front if you are more "Tourist" - ALL ARE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN US!
MODERATE	This is fun, and can be challenging. Chance of citation elevated on roads other than the Dragon.
PANTS ON FIRE	Very dangerous if you think you can drive better than you really can. Even our best have scratched pain on guardrails. Members of these runs are often cited for speed, so expect a ticket - no complaining!