PROUDLY CONTRARIAN

HERMIT WOODS WINERY

Wine Club Release

Sring 2024

Dear Club Members,

As we approach our fourteenth year as a winery, we find ourselves reflecting on the remarkable journey we've undertaken and the incredible transformations our business has undergone in what feels like the blink of an eye. With the dawn of 2024, we are thrilled to announce yet another exciting chapter in our story.

It is with great pleasure that we extend a warm invitation to Chef Kaylon Sweet (known as Sweets) and his team at Sweet Mercy, who will be taking the reins of our restaurant operations. This change heralds a host of opportunities, including a revamped menu, full-service dinner offerings, and the forthcoming addition of a full bar.

Under Sweets' culinary stewardship, our dining experience will be elevated to new heights. Expect a farm-to-table menu that harmonizes American flavors with global influences, crafting a symphony for the taste buds that transports you from the bustling streets of New York to the vibrant markets of Marrakech—all inspired by Sweets' worldly travels. Additionally, in collaboration with Birch Rise Farm, Sweets will debut a Farm-to-Food-Truck concept in our garden this year, further expanding our culinary offerings.

Needless to say, Ken, Chuck, and I are excited to pair our wines with Sweets' innovative cuisine, creating unforgettable culinary experiences for our cherished patrons.

As always, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and for joining us on this extraordinary journey.

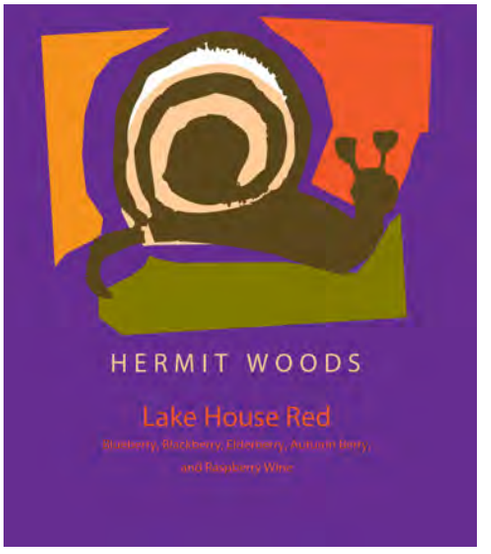
Warm regards,
Bob, Ken, Chuck, and Sweets

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2020 Lake House Red

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 173 Cases Produced - 12.5 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

We first started making wines many years ago, but the first time we blended blueberry, blackberry, elderberry and raspberry wines was in 2013. We called this wine Lake House Red. All but a couple bottles of that first vintage remain in our library; however, we are very pleased to share with you our latest vintage, 2020. We have found this wine ages well, able to improve in the cellar over at least 5 years.

Wine Notes

As with past vintages, this wine is produced from wild, low-bush blueberries and blackberries, elderberries, and raspberries. Complex dark fruit notes marry with the oak from barrel aging, yielding a pleasing dry red wine experience like no other.

Pairing Suggestions

As a bright red wine, with plenty of acidity and good structure from the barrel aging, this pairs well with robust cheeses, quiche, and tangy fish preparations.

Farmers Notes

There are multiple sources of fruit for this vintage. The blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; the blackberries are from New Jersey; and the elderberries are from Arkansas. In the first few years of crafting Lake House Red, we used red raspberries, but that changed in 2019 when we used black raspberries for the first time. Those came from an organic grower in Washington state, but for our more recent vintages, we now have a local black raspberry grower in New Hampshire.

Vinification

In the 2020 vintage, we used our preferred Lalvin D254 and D21 yeasts, but we fermented each component separately, similar to our approach for our early vintages of Hermitage. This allows us to nail the ratio for the best blend and to see what each component brings to the glass for future creations. All four batches (blackberry, elderberry, blueberry, and black raspberry) were ultimately combined, underwent further barrel aging, and then bottled. Total barrel time was about 16 months in French Oak. The wine is unfiltered.

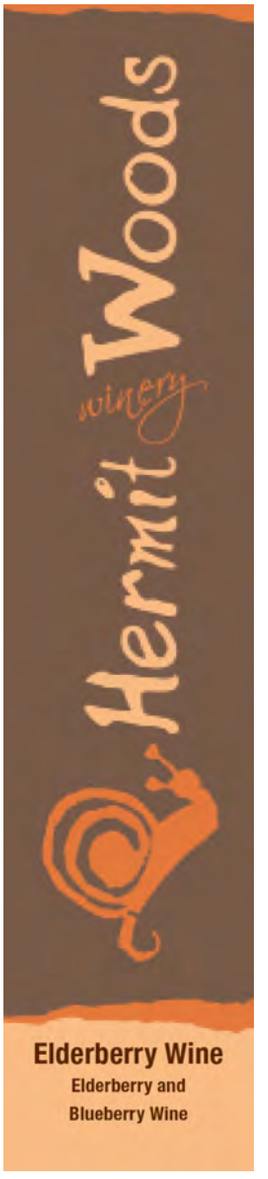
pH 3.62 RS 0% ABV 13.3%

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2020 Elderberry - NEW VINTAGE RELEASE

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 80 Cases Produced - 13.5 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

This fantastic fruit grows wild all over New England and there is even a song about elderberry wine, so we had to make such a wine! As you may know, our Hermitage wine is made of a blend of separate wines, including elderberry and blueberry. As we never know what proportions of these wines will be needed to make the optimal Hermitage, we always plan to have some leftover elderberry and blueberry wines. We then blend the remaining wines to find the best ratio for this dark, rich, dry red wine. However, 2020 was the last time we followed this practice, as we began co-fermenting the fruit for Hermitage in subsequent years. So, this is the last vintage of Elderberry wine!

Wine Notes

A blend of two dark berries: mostly elderberry and some blueberry. As with many of the great wines of the world, the wines are vinified and aged separately, then blended before bottling. This is done because different grapes and berries become ripe at different times, and we follow this practice to give us full control over the final blend.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy on its own, or with anything with which you would pair a fine Syrah or red Rhone blend, such as hearty meat dishes. I especially like the rich, earthy character of this wine with venison.

Farmers Notes

Our elderberries come from Dixieland Farm, an organic grower in Arkansas. The blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries, a three generation family blueberry harvester in Ellsworth, Maine. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. Our blueberries are the wild berries that grow close to the ground across much of Downeast Maine; the smaller berries provide us with a concentrated flavor and higher skin-to-juice ratio in order to equip our wines with the soft tannins we enjoy.

Vinification

Two wines are first separately crafted and then later combined in a specific ratio. The blueberries are fermented with Lalvin D254 yeast (Rhone strains), and the elderberries with Lalvin Rhone D21. Both wines undergo secondary fermentation in stainless steel tanks for a few weeks, and then an extended elevage in French oak barrels. Each wine is gravity-racked a few times during elevage; no fining or filtering occurs. Final blend ratio for this vintage is 42% blueberry and 58% elderberry.

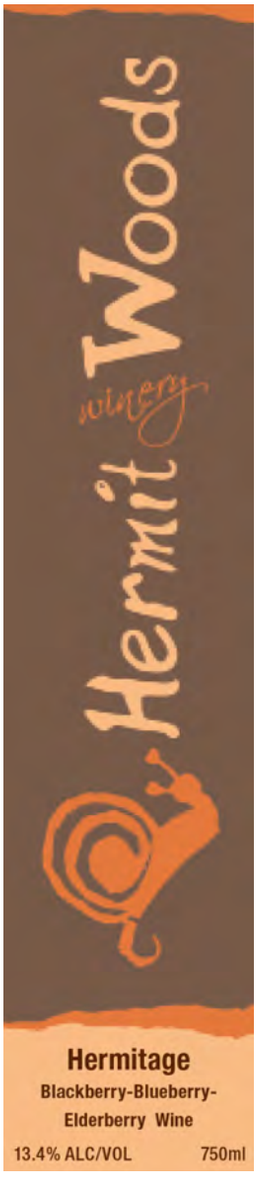
pH 3.6 RS 0% ABV 13.5

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2019 Hermitage

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 126 Cases Produced - 13.5 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

In France, there is a famous hill on the east bank of the Rhone which is the birthplace of the Syrah grape. It is named Hermitage in memory of the knight "Henri Gaspard de Sterimberg", who decided, upon his return from the Albigenisan Crusades, to live as a hermit on the hill granted to him by Anne of Castille, the Queen of Spain. He replanted the vineyard that would first become known as Ermitage, and then Hermitage. We too have history with a different hermit, Joseph Plummer, who lived back in the 1800's near where our winery originated in 2010. As enthusiasts of Syrah and all wines of the Rhone, it is wonderful to produce a wine from the fruit that grows right around here, and that is reminiscent of the Syrah wines of France's Hermitage. Also, our federal government amazingly granted us permission to label the wine "Hermitage"!

Wine Notes

A blend of four dark berry wines: blackberry, elderberry, black currant, and blueberry. As with many of the great wines of the world, the four wines are vinified and aged separately, then blended before bottling. This is done because different grapes and berries become ripe at different times, and we follow this practice to give us full control over the final blend.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy on its own, or with anything with which you would pair a fine syrah or red Rhone blend, such as hearty meat dishes and rich cheeses.

Farmers Notes

We source our blackberries from commercial growers in New Jersey. The elderberries come from Dixieland Farm, an organic grower in Arkansas. The black currants come from a best-practices grower in New York. The blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries, a three generation family blueberry harvester in Ellsworth, Maine. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness.

Vinification

Four separate wines were crafted, and then later combined in a specific ratio. The blackberry and blueberry wines were fermented with Lalvin D254 yeast, a strain originally captured from a Rhone ferment of Syrah grapes. The elderberries and black currants were fermented with Lalvin Rhone 2056. Each of the wines underwent secondary fermentation in stainless steel tanks for a few weeks, and then extended elevage in French oak barrels. Each wine was gravity-racked a few times during elevage; no fining or filtering occurred. The final blend ratio was achieved through many bench trials and is approximately: 43% blackberry, 39% blueberry, 15% elderberry and 3% black currant.

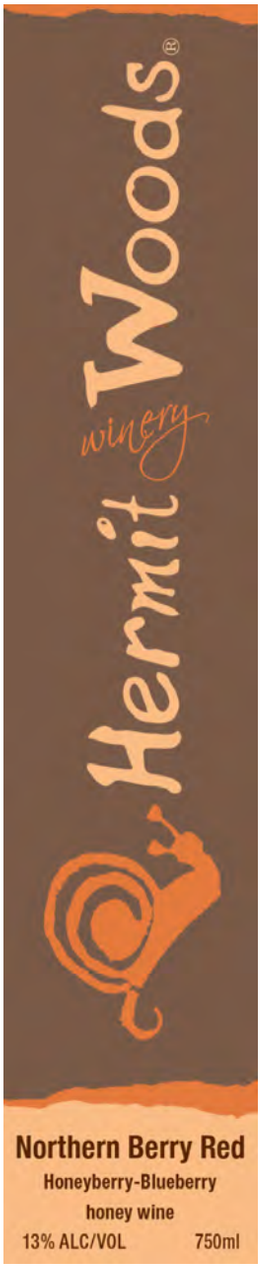
pH 3.54 RS 0% ABV 13.5

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2022 Northern Berry Red

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 140 Cases Produced - 13 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

While researching local sources of strawberries, we met Ben at Wayside Farm and Great Northern Berries. Ben not only grows beautiful strawberries, he also introduced us to the honeyberry (or haskap), a fantastic fruit of a certain honeysuckle plant. These berries are typically deep purple-blue in color; oblong, barrel, or flattened bullet in shape; and contain high levels of antioxidants and vitamin C. There are many varieties, with names like Aurora, Keiko, Taka, and Blue Forest. Although we have produced a Honeyberry Wine from these berries for many years, this is the third vintage where we have enough to include it in our club release, and I feel this is our best vintage yet!

Wine Notes

A complex, tangy, deeply colored wine composed mostly of honeyberries, but also including some wild blueberries and local wildflower honey. I often think this combines some of the characteristics found in our Petite Blue blueberry wine and our Heirloom Crabapple wine. Drink 2023-2025+.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy this wine slightly chilled on its own; with robust cheeses; with a caramelized garlic, spinach and cheddar tart; or with leeks au gratin.

Farmers Notes

The honeyberries, which come from Great Northern Berries in North Sandwich, NH, are a blend of varieties and include a good percentage of Aurora, which has the most 'wine-like' character. The wild blueberries are from Merrill's blueberry farms in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family wild blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. The raw wildflower honey is from local producer Hall Apiaries.

Vinification

For the first vintage of this wine in 2020, three separate wines were made and then combined. This allowed for more detailed insights into the various fermentation combinations and gave greater control over the final blend. For the subsequent vintages, with knowledge on the best combination of materials, we co-ferment all the components to get better integration and benefits from cofactors. The blend of honeyberries, blueberries and honey captures the best of each and creates a very complex honeyberry-blueberry-honey wine. The blend was sterile filtered and 23.75 g/L of sugar was added before bottling for drinking balance.

pH 3.45 RS 2.4% ABV 13

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2022 Heirloom Crabapple

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 335 Cases Produced - 12.7 Alc By Vol.

A Story in Every Bottle

We discovered the delightful "Dolgo" crabapple when I took a bite of one of the little red apples growing on a tree in Bob's front yard years ago. The resulting experimental wine was outstanding, and it has quickly become our signature wine. Further research revealed that the Dolgo crabapple was brought to this country from Kazakhstan in the 1800's to add flavor to the cider being made at the time. Chuck has been busy connecting us with apple growers in our region that will grow and harvest Dolgos for us. One of Chuck's favorite wines is the sparkling version of our crabapple wine, called "Dolgo." Stone Mountain Orchard, a local grower in Belmont, NH, even planted trees specifically for us!

Wine Notes

Produced from Dolgo crabapples and wild, low-bush blueberries. Bright, fresh apple aromas precede a lively, mouth-watering, cranberry-like and apple flavored tang reminiscent of a cranberry rosé.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy this wine on its own and with many different foods. This wine pairs especially well with roast turkey (Thanksgiving!) or chicken. For a summer treat, try it over ice.

Farmers Notes

Four farms - Allison's Orchard, Saxton, Stone Mtn and Scott Farms - supplied us with Dolgo crabapples. These farms grow a wide variety of heirloom apples and other fruit, and they follow best management practices ensuring the highest quality produce. Chuck, our partner, has developed a close relationship with the orchard managers over the years, and enjoys the time of harvest. Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness.

Vinification

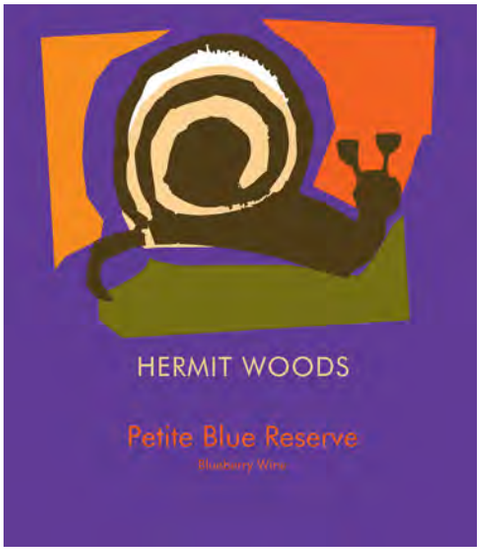
The fresh crabapples are crushed and added to the right amount of water and sugar in one of our large fermenting vessels. Then, Lalvin OKay wine yeast is added for primary fermentation at a temperature of about 65F. The wine is then aged in stainless steel tanks, with light toast, French oak staves suspended in the wine for 5 months, allowing for extraction of wood tannins and flavor, all while enhancing the structure. pH 3.25 RS 3.25% ABV 12.7%

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2021 Petite Blue Reserve

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 225 Cases Produced - 12.7 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

Years before the winery started, Chuck, Bob and I - as well as a small group of friends we hung out with - would meet on a monthly basis to taste wine. At one particular evening of wine tasting, Bob brought out a bottle in a brown bag and shared it, and asked us what type of wine it was (other than red - ha!). All of us enjoyed it. Some thought it was a pinot noir, but none of us could guess that it was actually, against all odds, a dry blueberry wine! The next day, Chuck and his wife picked a whole bucket of fresh blueberries and showed up on my doorstep with them, requesting that I make wine like what we had the night before. Since then, I have been making dry blueberry wines every season, and the results - our famous "Petite Blue" and "Reserve" - have become some of our most sought-after wines.

Wine Notes

Petite Blue Reserve is reminiscent of some pinot noirs, perhaps a little drier and richer than some, with aromas and flavors that differ from grape wines because this wine is crafted entirely from wild, low-bush blueberries. The Reserve is a bit bigger and bolder than our regular Petite Blue, with more tannic grip.

Pairing Suggestions

We have found Petite Blue Reserve to pair very well with a wide variety of foods, such as savory quiche, stuffed mushrooms, pepper chèvre, and herbed pork or chicken dishes. The wine is also delightful on its own!

Farmers Notes

Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. Our blueberries are the wild berries that grow close to the ground across much of Downeast Maine; the smaller berries provide us with a concentrated flavor and higher skin-to-juice ratio which give our wines the soft tannins we enjoy.

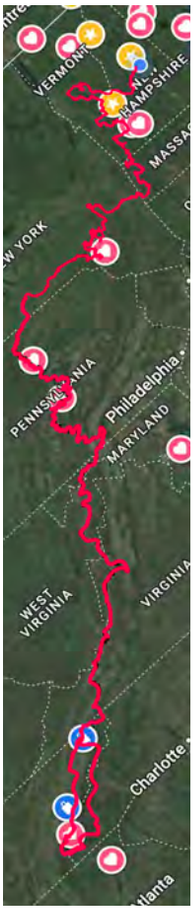
Vinification

To bring forth the fresh bright blueberry aromas and flavors married with deep richness and oak spice, a number of important steps are taken during the vinification and elevage of these wines. Fermentation occurs in one of our two supertanks with pumpovers for maximum extraction of fruit flavors and tannins. A special yeast strain from the Cornas area of the Rhone valley in France is used for its ability to showcase the fruit. Petite Blue is free run off early for more fruit, and the Reserve stays on the skins longer for bigger tannic grip. The Reserve is aged in French Oak barrels for 6 months. The Reserve wine is unfiltered.

pH 3.27 RS 0% ABV 12.7

HERMIT WOODS

KEN, CHUCK, AND BOB'S GRAND ADVENTURE, A 2,700 MILE MOTORCYCLE RIDE.



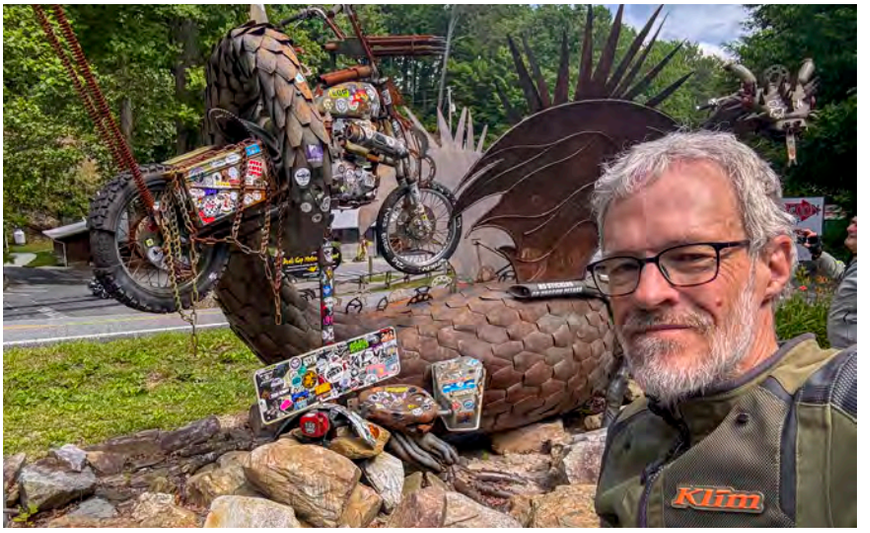
If you've been a member of Hermit Woods Winery for any length of time, you know that Hermit Woods is about more than just wine. Founders Ken, Chuck, and Bob have poured their hearts into the winery, making it not only a place to craft exceptional wines but also a reflection of their shared passions for adventure, exploration, and friendship. The experiences they gather outside the winery are as important as what happens within, fueling their inspiration and creativity.

This journey wasn't just about riding motorcycles. It was about deepening friendships, embracing discovery, and drawing inspiration from the world around us. The adventures and conversations they share during their travels often spark ideas for enhancing the winery, whether it's new approaches to hospitality, fresh ideas for events, or unique culinary experiences.

In this latest adventure, we're excited to take you along on a recent motorcycle trip from Tennessee back to New Hampshire. It's a story of endurance, excitement, and the lessons learned along the way.

To kick off the trip and minimize time on major highways, the trio transported their motorcycles to North Carolina via a one-way U-Haul truck. Ken and Bob rode Triumph Tiger 1200s, while Chuck powered through on his BMW GSA. After dropping off the truck in Brush Fork, West Virginia, they embarked on an epic 2,700-mile ride that would test both riders and machines.

A 2,700 MILE MOTORCYCLE ADVENTIURE - HERMIT WOODS



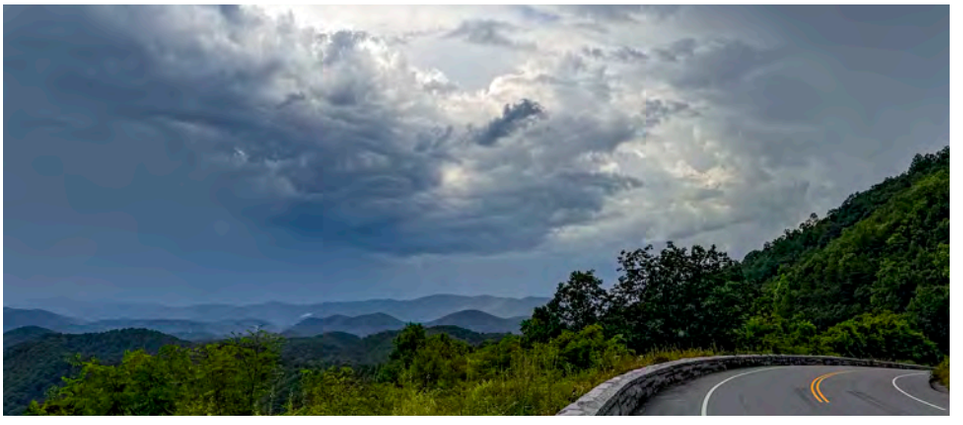
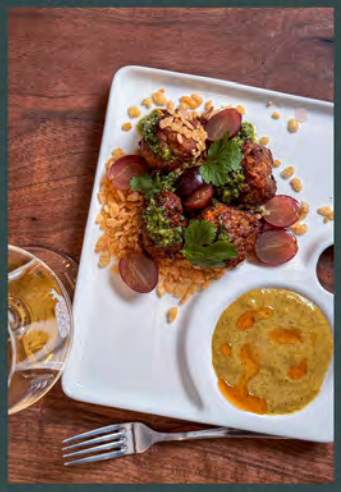
Their journey began in Tennessee, where they tackled the legendary Tail of the Dragon—a thrilling stretch of road with 318 curves in just 11 miles. From there, they meandered through the stunning Blue Ridge Parkway, soaking in the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains. Along the way, they took advantage of the Bunk-a-Biker service, finding not just accommodations but also kindred spirits and fellow adventurers.

After three days of exploring the Smokies, the group headed northward on the Mid-Atlantic Backcountry Discovery Route (MABDR), savoring the tranquility and wild beauty of the Appalachian backcountry. While flat tires, muddy trails, and thunderstorms occasionally slowed them down, these challenges only added to the sense of accomplishment. The group successfully navigated rocky class 4 sections that rattled their bikes and nerves, yet rewarded them with awe-inspiring vistas and unforgettable campsites. Taconic State Park stood out for its luxurious campground facilities, complete with restrooms better than many hotels they'd seen!

The ride was not just about overcoming obstacles—it was also a celebration of local culture. The trio indulged in mom-and-pop diners, tucked away cafés, and unique restaurants along the route. One highlight was their visit to Seven Mountains Wine Cellars, where they received an impromptu tour and were invited to camp on the picturesque winery grounds, making the connection between wine and adventure even more tangible.

A 2,700 MILE MOTORCYCLE ADVENTIURE - HERMIT WOODS

Each day ended with camaraderie, cold beers, and laughter at charming spots like the Alpenglow Bistros, Wilmington Inn, and Edelweiss Restaurant. These moments of relaxation gave them time to reflect on the day's ride, share stories, and plan for the next adventure.

As they completed each section of the MABDR and North East Backcountry Discovery Route (NEBDR), Ken, Chuck, and Bob celebrated not only the miles they'd ridden but the memories they created together. Whether it was tackling rugged trails, bonding over the beauty of nature, or discovering new friendships, this journey was about more than motorcycles–it was about living fully, embracing challenges, and finding inspiration in every twist and turn.

This is why we share these experiences with you– from the winery to the open road, we're always learning, growing, and finding new ways to make Hermit Woods a place of discovery and connection.