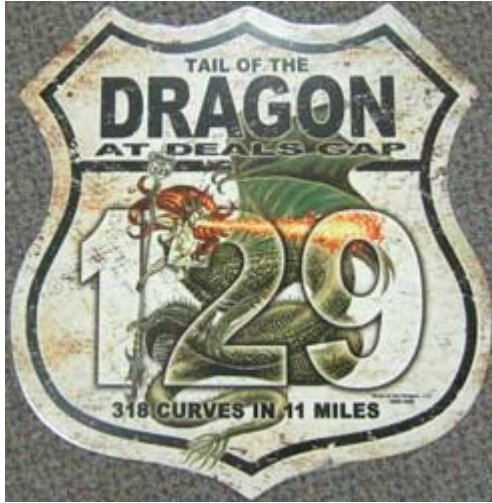


## Slaying "The Dragon"

It's a lazy weekend, and you want to take your Corvette out for a spin.

Maybe you live near the Great Smoky Mountains already, or maybe you're in Knoxville on business, but someone recommends a route called the *Tail of the Dragon*, so you've got to check it out.



Tail of the Dragon, or simply The Dragon, is an eleven mile stretch of U. S. Highway 129.

The highway's northern terminus is Knoxville, TN, and it runs south through Alcoa, where it's called the Alcoa Highway, and then into Deals Gap, which is where The Dragon really begins – an eleven mile stretch which ends just beyond the state line dividing Tennessee from North Carolina.

During the warmer months – spring through fall – the 318 curves of The Dragon make it a popular route for motorcyclists and sports car drivers, like you.

There is some discrepancy about the exact number of curves, which varies between 311 and 318 depending on how you count.

Every driver, if keeping count, would likely end up with a different total, but some of the more challenging curves have names, which include:

Copperhead Corner, Hog Pen Bend, Wheelie Hell, Killboy (formerly Shade Tree) Corner, Mud Corner, Sunset Corner, Gravity Cavity (particularly dangerous for truckers), Beginner's End, and Brake or Bust Bend.

Fans of the route will tell you that the road itself, while twisty, isn't particularly treacherous, as long as you have good driving skills and follow common sense rules of the road. These include:



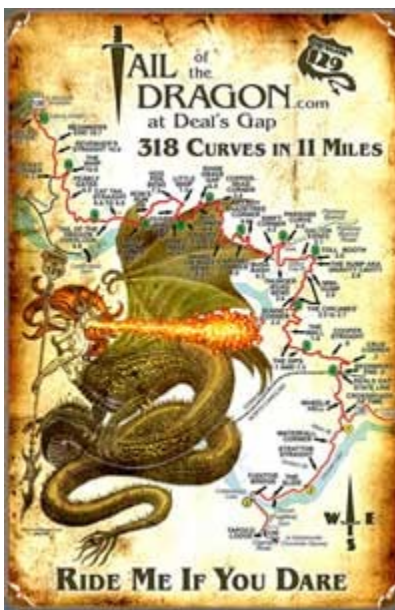
- **Stay in Your Lane:** The point of challenging the Dragon is to take the curves in the best line possible, which means not only staying in your lane, but staying in the right half of it as much as possible.
- **Obey the Speed Limit:** The speed limit on Tail of the Dragon used to be 55 mph, but it was reduced to 30 mph a few years ago.
- **Be aware of what's ahead,** including curves, bushes, the road itself, and other vehicles, especially sports cars and motorcycles either ahead of you, or coming from the opposite direction.
- **Focus on driving:** The Dragon isn't meant for site seeing – not in a Corvette, anyway – but for pushing your driving skills. Stay focused, and keep the best line possible, without cutting corners.
- **Don't race:** There will always be faster cars. This isn't a competition against anyone but yourself.

- Don't over-brake: Standing on the brakes makes your car less maneuverable. A light tap and judicious down-shifting will keep you far safer.
- Don't tailgate: Trucks ahead need ample room to slow and turn, and other drivers may not have the driving skills you do. Leave a "safety zone" between yourself and the cars and bikes around you.
- It's also said that you should plan to make several runs – with the first being a "nervous" run.

The Dragon doesn't get a huge amount of traffic – only about 400 vehicles a day – and experts say there's less chance of law enforcement officers being out and about during the early morning hours.

But never forget....they are there!

So, pick a summer day, hop in your [Corvette](#). Head to the Tennessee/North Carolina state line and take your turn with the Tail of the Dragon..



**You might end up being a sensational Dragon slayer!**