

What's a Trailer Rodeo?

Experience a clinic just for handling your trailer



I'd never heard the term "trailer rodeo" before but soon I was deeply entrenched in all the information about manoeuvring a trailer. I've been pulling horses for most of my life but I quickly realized I had much to learn (and unlearn). While a trailer rodeo sometimes involves a competition, this weekend's participants were just happy to learn new skills.

Glen McGoff, Director of North Cross Commercial Driving

School in Mt. Vernon, WA taught a clinic this past Saturday, April 11th at Fire Mountain Trail Course in Sedro Woolley. Quite a day, but wow did I come away with great information and more confidence in my ability to back and manoeuvre my 33' living quarter! Glen carefully guided me as I manoeuvred this big, heavy trailer between the cones.



Having a clutch adds to the skill level required to do all this without wearing out that clutch and running over all the cones. Glen explained that you NEVER ride a clutch or adjust your speed with your clutch. Engage and go. To slow things down, drop your truck down to low range so your reverse is much slower. This way you can guide your truck safely without racing

backwards. Those with automatic transmissions really have it made!

I watched, as all the other drivers were able to successfully manoeuvre around the cones with Glen's instruction. Half the day was spent in a classroom format, and the rest of the day was spent practicing the techniques Glen shared with us. Everyone came away with more skills and confidence.

For such a small investment it's really worth spending a day learning techniques to safely and accurately back and manoeuvre your truck and trailer. We backed straight through cones (and that's more difficult than you might think), backed around a corner and finally manoeuvred around a cul-de-sac. Glen teaches drivers to use your hand on the top of the steering wheel for driving forward and the bottom of the wheel for backing. The back end of your trailer will go in the direction of your hands. That was a tough one for me.

We learned about safety: understanding GVWR (gross vehicle weight rating), how much your truck is capable of hauling, techniques for going downhill and climbing. We also got a great buy on safety triangles through Glen. All in all the day was a great experience.



Keeping your precious cargo safe and your vehicle free of dents made this clinic well worth the investment. Fire Mountain Trail Course is the perfect place to host these events, as the ground is firm, has lots of room and it's easy on trailer tires and axles to make tight turns.

I would invite you to contact Glen McGoff of North Cross Commercial Driving School at 360-424-0373 or visit his website at www.northcrosscdl.com. You can also visit www.firemountaintrailcourse.com for more fun events and activities at the trail course. [Fire Mountain Trail Course](#) hosts a show series, obstacle training and clinics. It's one of my favourite places to camp and show during the summer months. Visit her website or [Facebook Page](#) for clinic and event dates.

Last April I had the pleasure of attending a truck /trailer clinic and “rodeo” at Fire Mountain Trail Course in Sedro Woolley, Washington. I have hauled horses most of my life, but have always struggled with backing up. Recently I purchased a living quarter’s gooseneck trailer that is 33’ long. It is a different driving experience than a bumper pull so I wanted some insight into manoeuvring such a long trailer.

The first weekend I had the trailer I foolishly drove 600 plus miles round trip. My husband and I were heading to the



Northwest Horse Fair & Expo in Albany, Oregon so I (thankfully) only had magazines as cargo. I had a little manoeuvring training from Maggi at [Bickford Trailers](#) before pulling out of the lot, but that was it. The added weight made it feel like I was pulling a house! I had much to learn about braking and manoeuvring such a big trailer and even with all my experience towing a bumper pull it was a big adjustment. Getting in and out of my driveway was pretty comical and when

hauling my new trailer I stuck to rest area exits and huge parking lots. Everything took a lot more time.

I always appreciate Marilyn Pineda and her wonderful trail course. It's easy to get in and out of her parking area and is the perfect place for a training course. When she decided to host this driving clinic I jumped at the chance to be involved. Here's what to expect for future truck/trailer rodeos at Fire Mountain:



The first half of the day is in the classroom. Glen McGoff, director of the [North Cross Commercial Driving School](#) in Mt. Vernon is your instructor. Who better to teach such a course than a professional trucker? We went over the logic behind manoeuvring a trailer and how to prepare before hauling your horse. He covered some rules of the road, talked about braking and acceleration and the importance of doing both slowly. It's super important to understand how much real estate you'll

need to stop your vehicle. Glen also reviews GVWR (Gross Vehicle Weight Restriction): Knowing and understanding GVWR is important to towing because it tells you explicitly the maximum weight of passengers and cargo you can safely carry in your truck. GVWR is the total combined weight of truck, including all passengers, fuel, fluids and cargo. GVWR is constant and does not change, regardless of what you tow. It's engineered in the vehicle when it is manufactured.

Glen's tips for saving your truck:

- 1) Use gears not brakes on grades.
- 2) Know how heavy you are and how much stopping power you have.
- 3) Turn on your flashers if going slow.
- 4) Take your time; don't be in a hurry.
- 5) Exhaust brakes are great but use them sparingly to preserve your engine.
- 6) Don't use trailer brakes to save your truck brakes. You never want to lose your trailer brakes!
- 7) Don't lug your engine (Especially with a diesel).
- 8) Never push your truck so hard you have no more pedal. Always have a reserve of power.

9) Attend the clinic!



The afternoon was practical application. Glen set up cones and we practiced making turns and backing through cones. It's tougher than it looks. He helps you position the rig so you can make those tight turns.

I came away with great information and some confirmation about things I was not sure of. I highly recommend this event if you want to build your trailer skills—your horses are worth it!

Email info@firemountainfriesians.com and LIKE [Fire Mountain Trail Course](#) on Facebook. There's a clinic coming up on April 11, 2015 so call today to reserve your spot. I'm taking it again!