

## Watkins Glen Guide

Watkins Glen International  
2790 County Route 16, Watkins Glen, New York



**WGI** is a 3.45 mile road course located in the middle of New York State at the tip of Lake Seneca. The track has long straights and high speeds, as well as lots of elevation change. While it has about the same number of turns as NHMS, it is a bit more intimidating due to the higher speed potential of the long straights.

During most events, the Sound Pressure Level limit is unlimited, but you must have a reasonable muffler for the sake of the other drivers.

Typical passing zones are all straights, except no passing between turns 10 and 11, specifically:

- Front straight between turns 11 and 1
- Back straight between turns 4 (last of the esses) and turn 5a (entry to bus stop)
- Chute, between turn 5 (outer loop) and turn 6
- Laces of the boot between turn 6 and turn 7 (toe)
- Sole of the boot between turn 7 (toe) and turn 8 (heel)
- Back of the boot between turn 8 and turn 9 (off camber)
- Between turn 9 (off camber) and turn 10 (fast left).

**Watkins Glen Travel Information.** Watkins Glen is about 7 hours west of Boston. Start by taking I-90 (Mass Pike) West, then I-87 (New York Thruway) North toward Albany, then I-90 West toward Buffalo. There are several variations which differ in length but all take about the same amount of time. The route suggested by [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com) via I-88 to Route 17 is popular and fairly easy to follow. Be careful of speed traps in New York State. Try to arrive early enough relax.

The Seneca Lodge is rustic, but popular; avoid the older “cottages.” For other lodging, visit [www.theglen.com](http://www.theglen.com), then under Fan Info, click Accommodations. There is a gas station in the town of Watkins Glen at the intersection of Rt 16 and Rt 414 which has coffee and convenience style type breakfast in the morning. Gas up either the night before or in the morning before heading up to the track. Print some maps so that you’ll know where you are going in the morning.

There is usually no food available for purchase at the track. Pack a lunch or drive into town at lunch (perhaps with a friend).

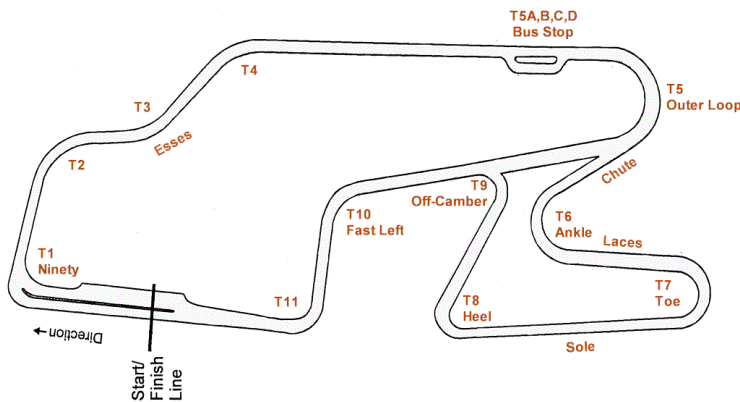
**Watkins Glen Morning Information.** Traveling west on route Route 16, you’ll see a large Watkins Glen International sign marking the main entrance on your left. Pull in line and stay in your car. Do not arrive before the gate opens as the police don’t allow cars to queue up on the public road. When at the head of the line, you’ll be handed the track waiver, which you’ll sign. Proceed through the gate, up the hill and under the underpass. Obey the track’s speed limit, which is 15 MPH here. Proceed straight through two stop signs and enter the fence at the end, turning left into the garage area. Find a parking spot along the fence on either side of the garage. Back into the spot, leaving enough room behind your car to unload your belongings.

Bring your driver's license inside the garage and find the registration table at the end. Get in the correct student line, by last name. Receive your registration packet, event shirt (if any), and sign the club waivers. If it raining or it looks like rain is possible, ask someone if you can place your belongings in their garage space to keep them dry – you are entitled to this. If you can share a garage bay with your mentor or instructor, that's even better.

**Watkins Glen Pit-Out procedure.** Absent other instructions, bring your helmet and drive your car clockwise around the garages to the staging area parallel to the garages (on the side with the bathrooms). Park in parallel lines usually marked with orange cones. Pick up your instructor here. Before putting on your helmet and seatbelt, proceed through the gate, staying right of the orange traffic cones. Turn slightly right, driving across an expanse of pavement outside of the control tower. Go through a gate and queue up in rows. Put on your helmet and seatbelt here and prepare to go out on the track. You'll be waved out onto the track by a corner worker. Display your wrist band as you pass. Turn sharply right onto Pit Road. Proceed down pit road and go around the corner to the right. Check your mirrors for cars to merge with. Accelerate briskly up to track speed, staying all the way to the right, inside the yellow blend line painted on the pavement. Stay right all the way to the apex of Turn 2 (the entry into the esses).

**Watkins Glen Pit-In procedure.** Go through turn 9, the off-camber left, tracking out to the right. Give the fist Pit-In signal. Take a wide "rim shot" line through turn 10 (the fast left), staying away from the apex. Keep your fist out the window and stay all the way right. At turn 11, stay inside the yellow line and turn right tightly around the apex and enter Pit Road. *Other cars must yield the apex to you, staying outside the yellow line.* Decelerate to a prudent Pit Road speed and turn right at the first gate. Stay right of the orange cones in the gate and return to your parking spot.

### Watkins Glen Track Map and Description



The following turn-by-turn description is intended for a novice driver.

**Front Straight.** You are traveling down the front straight, past start/finish. Position your car about a half car width from the left side of the track. Full throttle.

**Turn 1 The Ninety.** Brake in a straight line and look at the apex on the right side of the track. Downshift if needed. Release the brake and turn the car in an arc, bringing it to the apex. Sight the track-out, squeeze on power and track out to, but not on, the track out pavement curbing. Check your mirrors and point by cars to the right as needed. Also be aware of cars entering the track between turns 1 and 2.

**Turn 2 The Esses.** Upshift before Turn 2 as needed, even if this means short shifting before red line. You will not want to shift in the Esses. Turns 2, 3, and 4 are linked right-left-right turns. Check your mirrors for entering traffic. Lift off the throttle before turn 2; some novices may feel that they need to tap the brakes. With neutral throttle (just enough to maintain your speed), sight the apex curbing on the right and turn in. Stay tight to the right curbing until the apex curbing ends. Squeeze on power as you are comfortable.

**Turn 3.** Sight the apex curbing on your left and smoothly transition left to the apex. Maintain your throttle and look at the top of the hill on the right. Do not abruptly lift off the throttle in the esses as you may spin.

**Turn 4.** Transition smoothly back to the apex on the right. Check your mirrors for traffic. Sight the track-out point and allow the car to drift out to the left. Point by cars to the right as soon as you are comfortable. You may need to lift to allow lower horsepower cars by you. Full throttle down the back straight with the car positioned a few feet from the left of the track. Upshift if needed. Highest speed at the Glen.

**Turns 5a, b, c, d The Bus Stop** Brake hard in a straight line. Downshift as needed. Look deep into the bus stop. You are making one big swooping right-left-right turn. Be smooth with the steering and don't accelerate yet – you're not done. Track out to about one car width from the left side of the track and begin looking around the corner to the right.

**Turn 5 The Outer Loop.** Gradually wind the car to the right down to a blind apex around the corner. Once you are at the apex, check your mirrors and squeeze on the throttle. This chute is usually a passing zone (confirm this at the morning's Driver's Meeting). Point cars by to the right as desired/allowed. Transition to the right side of the track.

**Turn 6 The Ankle of the Boot.** You are going downhill. Brake hard. Sight the apex around the corner and turn in smoothly. Sight the track-out point and squeeze on the throttle when you're sure that you'll make the track-out. Do not put tires off the track here. Check your mirrors. Complete the turn, transition left and point by on the right. You may need to up-shift.

**Turn 7 The Toe.** You are going down hill positioned on the left side of the track. Brake in a straight line and downshift if needed. The apex is most of the way around the corner. Smoothly turn-in. At the apex, squeeze on full power and track out to the left side. Check your mirrors and point by to your right as needed. You may need to lift to help the other car(s) pass. Go up the hill and stay on the left side of the track. Upshift as needed.

**Turn 8 The Heel.** Brake hard in a straight line and turn in for a late apex. At the apex, squeeze on the throttle and track out to the left. Check your mirrors and point by to the right as needed. This is a short uphill section; any passing will have to be completed quickly. Transition to the right side of the track.

**Turn 9 The Off-Camber.** Brake and look around the corner. The apex is very late. Do not squeeze on throttle until you can see the track-out point and are sure you will make it. There very little extra room here. Check your mirrors and point by on the left as needed.

**Turn 10 The Fast Left.** Tap the brakes as needed, and smoothly turn in. Make sure you get all the way down to the apex. Track all the way out to the track-out curbing, smoothly squeezing on throttle. Transition to the left side of the track.

**Turn 11.** Align your car parallel to the left side of the track and brake in a straight line. Check for cars entering Pit Road, and if so, adjust your apex so that you do not cross the yellow Pit Road line, leaving the inner lane for cars

leaving the track. Turn in, apex, then sight the track-out point and squeeze on throttle. There is not much extra room here. Don't accelerate until you can see the track-out point and are sure you are going to make it. Point cars by on the right, as needed. Upshift as needed. You are now back on the front straight.