

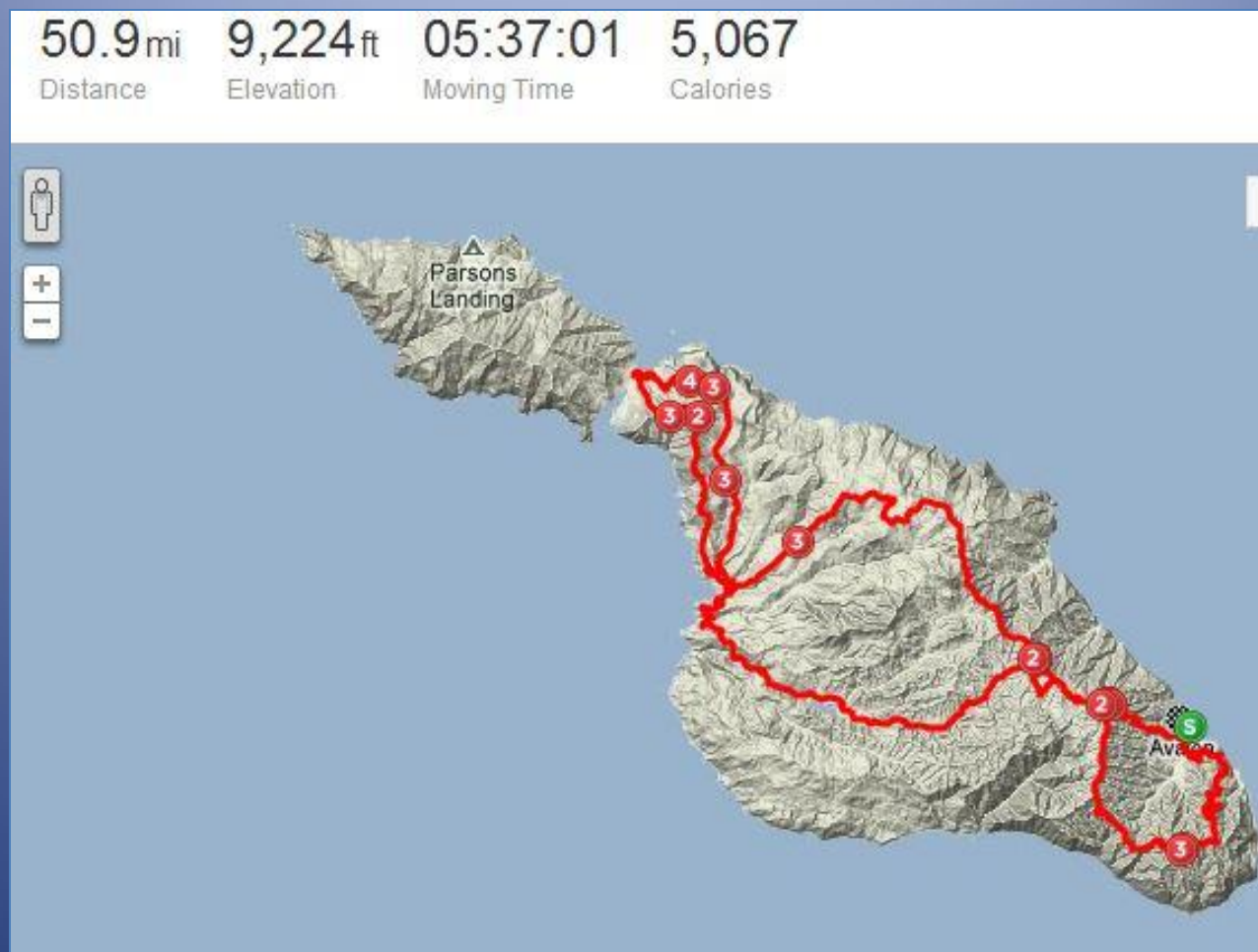
CATALINA ISLAND GRAN FONDO

MAY 11, 2013

by David Ernst



Start of the excellent adventure for Dave and riding buddies Eric Hoffman and Tom Marshall of the Velo 605 Cycling Club of Newport Beach. Approximately 600 riders (most behind me) signed up.



Quick look at my actual route, per Strava. Started and finished in Avalon with the furthest point out being Two Harbors. Catalina Island is bigger than it looks on this map!



by David Ernst



Per Strava, route profile. Basically always up and down. The climbs were long and tough and the descents were fast and a blast. The scenic views of the various mountain tops were amazing (you'll soon see).

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The Start. Beginning right in the town of Avalon, the starting three (3) miles was up Stagecoach Road. The average grade was about 10% I'd say, with a few nasty kickers. Brutal start of a 51 mile ride!



Sort of a typical road and territory view of the ride. Here me and this unnamed rider are past the airport, and getting ready for the first long down Sheep Shute Road.



This blurry pic shows basically the smoothest downhill section on the long Sheep Shute Road. Several other descents were on uneven dirt with a few lips to get some air! My top speed for the day was 36 mph.



All smiles from Tom on this relatively flat section after the Sheep Shute Road downhill fun. Having ridden with Tom before I know he's an amazing descender - he makes me look slow!



Approaching the Isthmus Cove at Two Harbors – the cove that faces the mainland. I’ve been to the Isthmus many times, including camping with Abby and the Indian Princess tribe. The Y camp ground is just ahead.



After a quick water refill with Tom the long and brutal climb out of Two Harbors has already started. This is the view of the harbor on the windward side of Two Harbors.

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This 20% grade has wiped the smile right off of Tom's face! Worse yet we're just starting the long and brutal climb out of Two Harbors. The Isthmus Cove is just below the ridge.



Still climbing out of Two Harbors. It doesn't look like much in this pic but the first 25%± climb is at the top. The difference between a 20% and 25% climb is huge, trust me!



Yes, yet again still climbing out of Two Harbors. My first walk and push moment occurred near the top of this 25% climb.
Why did I sign up for this ride again??

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Still climbing out of Two Harbors – will it ever stop? No matter, this ridgeline trail is the iconic moment of the ride. That's the mighty Pacific to the right in the clouds, about 1,000 feet straight down. Amazing!

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On top of the world!



Away from the amazing Pacific, ridgelines, and climbing out of Two Harbors. Typical view on the mostly gentle uphill, 10-mile long Middle Ranch Road.

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My water stop buddy on Middle Ranch Road.



Middle Ranch Road is done followed by this single track action. I'm very tired and hot by this point of the ride. What's in the distance?

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A herd of Buffalo!! This pic does not do justice to their close proximity (or size). They are close enough to scare me if they charge, as I'm too tired to ride away with any speed.

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Rest stop view of Avalon in the distance. So close yet so far. I've gone 40 miles and climbed 7,000 feet. Dead tired, dehydrated, and hot I want to coast down Stagecoach to Avalon. Still, 10+ miles and 1k feet to go.

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The upsides of the long way back to Avalon is seeing San Clemente Island in the distance and above the clouds. A rare view of San Clemente Island.

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I'm going to make it! The finish is just past the famous Casino and Theater (round building) at the end of the harbor in Avalon.
A 5-mile downhill finish. Bliss.

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Goodbye Catalina Island and the Catalina Gran Fondo 2013. Definitely back next year...this time I'll train properly (unlikely).