

Road Trip to Monterey

At 8.30am on Friday April 24, Eileen and I left Del Mar on a long drive to the Hotel Abrego in Monterey. We went via I-405 to I-5 and were lucky with light traffic and virtually no delays. If anyone ever heads up there we can recommend a pizza/beer place for lunch called 'Rustic Fire' at the intersection of CA-46 and CA-101. We eventually arrived in Monterey at about 3.30pm.

The impetus to travel to Monterey was to meet with friends for the weekend, one of whom was running the Big Sur Marathon (he did it in an amazing 3h 30m and thereby qualified for Boston). That said, we had our bikes and were looking forward to getting some good rides in.

On Saturday we were trying to dodge weather and so just rode South down Highway 1 to Big Sur. It was rollers all the way with a few decent climbs thrown in. Unfortunately the views weren't that great – as we rode south it got progressively darker, wetter, colder and windier. About 25 miles into the ride we decided it was time to turn around and head back to Monterey. Frankly it was getting a little bit risky to ride on increasingly wet roads, unpredictable cross winds, narrow bike lanes (if at all) and quite a lot of traffic including tour buses. We still got a good 50 mile ride with 4,500 feet of climbing . . . and the weather was much better by the time we reached Carmel so we did a quick detour through there.



Ready to roll (in new Descenders kit)



A cold, misty and windy day

On Sunday we did a ride recommended by Eric Wilson, one of our riding buddies here in San Diego. We basically rode counter-clockwise (that's 'anti-clockwise' for Mike H and myself) around the 17 mile Scenic Drive. We stopped and took a lot of photos – it was a beautiful day, sunny with relatively light winds. We then headed East on Carmel Valley Road (yes, really) to the bottom of Laureles Grade. Here we took a left and did a really nice 3.5 mile climb. I can't remember the grade exactly, but recall it was between 7-12% most of the way. After the sweeping descent down the other side we completed a loop heading back to Monterey on some back roads that were scenic, traffic free and definitely pitchy! A 50 mile ride with a 3,500 feet of elevation change. Eileen collected a number of top 3 Strava medals along the way!



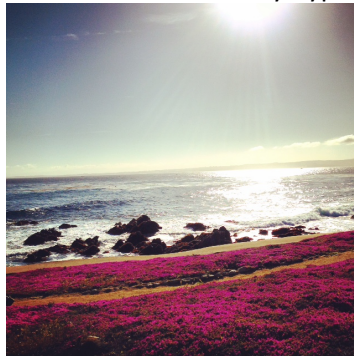
17 mile Scenic Drive



Lone Monterey Cypress – icon of 17 mile Scenic Drive



17 mile Scenic Drive



17 mile Scenic Drive



Climbing the Laureles Grade (steep enough)

On Monday we drove South taking in the wonderful views along Highway 1 to Big Sur. After about an hour and half of driving we pulled into the tiny Lime Kiln State Park lot, unpacked our bikes and went climbing Nacimiento-Fergusson Road. This was recommended to us by Guido and is listed in the yellow "Climbing by Bike in CA" book as the most scenic climb in the USA. We thought it would be about a 7% grade . . . but the first 3 miles were an unrelenting 9-13%. After that it softened to around 5%. We climbed hard and Eileen took some good hardware (2nd/3rd on the uphill segments). Eileen's Garmin turned itself off during the ride – but fortunately she was also running the Strava app on her iPhone. We rode down the other side through a mostly wooded area for 3 miles and then did a U-turn and rode back up (7% the whole way). On the way down to the car, we stopped often to take photographs – it really is one of the most scenic rides I have ever done and the book is probably right to characterize it the way it does. 25 miles and 5,500 feet of climbing. Back at the car, we loaded the bikes and set off for Glendora – another very long drive punctuated with a stop at Rustic Fire for beer and pizza.



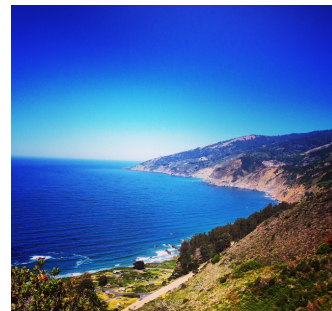
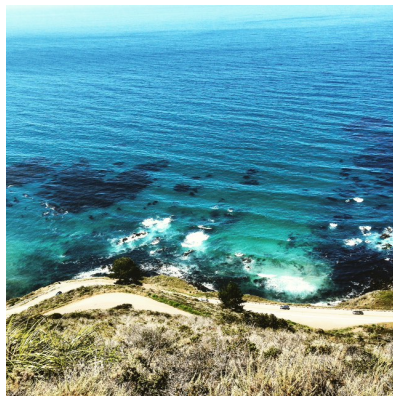
Climbing Nacimiento Road



Toward Fergusson Road



Descending Nacimiento back to car



In Glendora we stayed as usual at the Best Western Plus – a great base for climbing Glendora Mountain Road to Baldy. The next morning we got up early (expecting a daytime high of 90degF) and rode up Glendora Mountain Road to Glendora Ridge Road to Baldy Village. Once there we elected to skip the ride to the lifts and instead filled our water bottles and retraced our steps to the East Fork road. We took a right and headed down to the store at East Fork where we refilled bottles before riding back up East Fork Road (Eileen claiming a 9th place) and down GMR to Glendora. 61 miles with 7,200 feet of climbing. We were back at the hotel by 12.15pm and on the road home by 1pm. I suspect that it will be

very different when the ToC comes to town, but during our ride we didn't see more than 10 cars the whole day!



The reservoirs



Climbing



More climbing



All-in-all it was a great 4 days of riding (total of 185 miles and 21,000 feet of climbing) and spending time with friends. A lot of driving, but many of these rides are well worth it if you find yourself anywhere in the vicinity of them. Our rides are all posted to Strava if you want to check out any of the routes.