

A Sunday without a ride? Drove to see the final Tour of California stage in Sacramento



The Tour of California riding across the Tower Bridge in Sacramento. A Sunday evening without that feeling like you earned what you ate... it's not something I want to repeat again anytime soon! Or the drive home in heavy traffic either. But since the Tour of California didn't pass by anywhere close to us this year, we had to travel to see it. Tempting to give it a pass entirely, but needed to test out the camera gear (ok, more like test out my ability to use a camera), and my son's girlfriend had never seen a bike race in person.

Got there early enough to see the pre-start roll across the Tower Bridge (seen in the photo above), spend some time at the Sacramento Rail Museum and grab a nice lunch in Old Town while the race was doing a 70 mile spin out in no-man's land, and then take photos of the finishing circuit around the capitol.

I decided to try using my "Africa" 150-600mm (super-telephoto) lens for the first time at a bike race, with mixed results. Truthfully, it turned out to be the wrong lens for the day, for an odd reason. There was way too much atmospheric distortion on long shots... the lens could "get" shots way the heck down the road, but depending where you pointed it, particularly well-lit areas, you'd get fuzzy results. When atmospheric heating wasn't an issue, the shots were incredibly sharp, but anything about asphalt was suspect. And that's the problem with most bike racing shots. They're riding on asphalt. The good news is that it means I don't have to think about bringing that huge lens with me to France (even though I did figure a way to stuff it into my camera bag).

As for what happened in the race, well, not exactly sure! We couldn't get too close to the finish line (about 500 meters out) so most of what we saw were the riders setting up for the sprint. Mark Cavendish won, but I can't even find him in the photos I took. Sagan's there, along with Kristoff (2nd & 3rd places) but Cavendish was pretty well hidden at 500 meters to go.



Setting up for the finale, 500 meters to go. Sagan's there (green jersey), Kristoff too. Cavendish is hiding back there someplace, and came around to win.



OUCH! This is Peter Stetina, after crashing hard with a lap and a half to go. He's really got to be hurting tonight.