

Things are different here than there (but good to be back)



No, I didn't photoshop the cat into the picture far left. The middle shows a helmet made out of bamboo, an actual commercial product you can buy in Siem Reap. And the right show that the world is back in order; cookies that pass the cover-the-face test. Thursday morning I was in Cambodia. Friday, Singapore. Left Singapore at 9:45am Friday morning, and arrived San Francisco before I left. 7:45am. Two hours to live again, plus 14 hours that just vanished while flying. Sometimes, I'll admit, flying gets pretty strange.

This last trip involved 9 separate flights, the first set involving 26 hours of flying (actual time in the air) to get from SF to Cairns, Australia. The second set was "just" 11 hours, from Cairns to Siem Reap (Angkor Wat). The final trip home, from Siem Reap to SF, 17 hours. I don't even know how many actual miles we flew, but I can approximate about 29,000 miles. That sounds bad, but what hurt most was being off my bike for so long. Truth is, I did get in about 16 miles on a cruiser while in Cairns; in fact, even Karen rode 10 miles one day with me, in search of the mythical "Botanical Gardens" of Cairns, which remained elusive due to a closed access road. But that's a story for another time.

Today? Today I finally got to get back on MY bike and ride on MY roads. With my son, who also hadn't ridden in two weeks, because about the time my wife and I left for vacation, he managed to sprain his ankle by jumping on a cracked helmet (damaged helmets have to be destroyed so someone doesn't try to re-use them).

Of course, we did the usual. The reliable. Old LaHonda, Pescadero, Tunitas. I was tempted to think about something a bit less tough, but fortunately Kevin didn't even raise the possibility of doing anything less. In one of those typical displays that proves once and for all that youth is wasted on the young, Kevin took off hard on Old LaHonda and got to wait a few minutes for me to get to the top. A 21-something time for him; 24-something for me. No surprise there.

Haskins he still had the advantage on me, which didn't surprise me all that much. I'm carrying about 4 pounds more up those hills than before I left, and let's face it, it's tougher coming back from being off the bike when you're older. In Pescadero, I even skipped the cookie with lunch, just had half a sandwich and didn't even finish the coke. That might be why I didn't bog down later in the ride; by the time we got to Tunitas, I was feeling pretty good, and on the steeper parts, I even had Kevin on the ropes at times. At times. If we'd had a drag race bottom to top, my guess is he would have won. But we weren't racing to the top; it took about 54 minutes from the coast to Skyline... and I was OK with that.

The weather wasn't what I've been used to; both in Australia and Cambodia, it was 87 degrees and pretty high humidity. Today, mid-60s most of the time, and a colder fog on the coast bringing it down to 54 and making me think it would have been a good idea to be wearing a base layer, not just leg warmers. But of course we warmed up nicely when climbing Tunitas. What conditions would I prefer? Definitely here! You can dress and be comfortable for cooler weather, and you can do OK when it's warm and dry, but warm & muggy isn't much fun to ride in. Kevin and I get to do some of that in France. You do get used to it, but we've got it really, really nice here. Plus, we've got mountains. There are no mountains anywhere near Siem Reap (Angkor Wat).