

All aboard the train!



Beautiful day on Skyline! Time for an "Ugly" ride! Kevin was off with his girlfriend, and there's something special about doing something you don't particularly enjoy. The challenge of fighting off the urge to avoid what's really tough. This was that day. As much as the Old LaHonda/Pescadero/Tunitas loop has come to define the "norm" for the Sunday ride, this... south through the foothills, up Redwood Gulch & Highway 9, then north on Skyline... has become the go-to alternate when I'm riding solo.

Of course, I still have to ride past the location of our former store in Los Altos, and note that it's still empty. It's first & best purpose was clearly to be a bicycle shop, and for a quarter of a century (wow, that seems so long when you say it that way!), that's what it was.

No coffee at Peets this time; in-ride fueling was a blueberry breakfast bar thingee, something kind of like a blueberry fig newton. Seemed to work OK, eating it 15 minutes prior to Redwood Gulch. I can generally do 100k without a food stop, although if I were doing the coast run, I'd have to be in a real hurry to pass on Pescadero Bakery! And the day was cool enough to not require extra water, dipping to just under 40 as I was climbing highway 9.

Oh, right, climbing highway 9. There's that little thing called Redwood Gulch that gets to you first. I've been toying with different ways of attacking(?) that climb, lately trying not to get too gassed too soon. Doesn't seem to matter. The last three times have all been within 20 seconds of each other, which is especially interesting because I don't have any segment feedback from my computer as I'm riding it.

While there had been quite a few rabbits to chase down earlier in the ride, there were none on either Redwood Gulch or Highway 9. You'd think there'd be a feeling of being alone, but there really wasn't. It's about 35 minutes from the base of Redwood Gulch to the top, but definitely feels a lot longer than that, especially the highway 9 segment. But it's not **that** long; as I was climbing, I was thinking how it feels a lot like the bottom third of the Galibier.

Once up on Skyline (still no Mr. Mustard, by the way) I picked up my first rabbit, a guy somewhere near my age that was moving pretty quickly. Think we were both pushing harder than we normally might have, which showed up on Strava. PR for the Saratoga Gap to Page Mill segment, by a whole minute! That surprises me but, like I said, we were both pushing and he was definitely into trading off to keep the pace up. Which meant I was out of breath and couldn't talk so I never did get his name, but figured I'd see him on Strava. What? He's not there? Everybody isn't on Strava???! He headed back down Page while I pushed on north, and might have had a pretty good time for that segment too except for stopping to admire the view from the scenic overlook (as seen in the photo at the top).

Further on I spied another guy in front of me, and of course had to chase him down. Another stronger older guy (Valery, someone I come across pretty frequently in the area, recognizable as a tall guy who never wears a helmet), but I had enough left to bridge the gap. Nothing more though! Fortunately that was shortly before the descent back into Woodside.

And that was that. Last ride for two weeks, and looking like it's going to be tough getting to 7000 miles this year. Sitting at 6,696 miles right now, and with just two weeks left, looks like I'll probably end at about 6900. Last year I finished at 6898, which was actually my best since beginning Strava in 2008. I'll do my best to get 6900 and beat it!

Why no riding for two weeks? Tonight my wife and I get on a train to Marrakesh! Well, we do get on a train, and we are heading to Marrakesh, but the first train goes to SFO. Sometime on Wednesday we'll be in Morocco. Why Morocco? Never been, and it's cheap. And everyone who has been says it's amazing. This will be different than most trips, since we'll be on a tour group (Gate1 Travel). At the end we do, in fact, take the Marrakesh Express from Casablanca to Marrakesh, where we catch a plane to Geneva, then Zurich then home.

The other day I was trying to figure out how I can afford to travel so much. Well for the most part, I travel very inexpensively. But some of it probably comes from saving money by not owning a car. My wife has a car, not me. What do I need one for? I can commute to work by bike, and if I have to have a car for something, I can borrow hers. I'm so used to this it's strange for me to think that people have to have their own car, and it certainly does save a lot of money. Cars are expensive! Not just the car itself, but insurance plus upkeep. The flip side is that bicycle retail is a tough business and these days, a successful shop isn't putting money in the bank. We'll see how long I can keep doing the travel thing. May have to stop doing trips that I can't rationalize by bringing my bike. :-)