

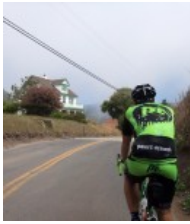
A good long climb and you'll feel better



The lower parts of Highway 9 are not entirely without charm

It sounded a bit odd as I said it, and yet it made complete sense. Kevin and I were at mile 65 or so of our 114-mile round trip to Santa Cruz, on the least-fun part through the San Lorenzo Valley, battling lots of traffic, a not-very-wide road and little junk climbs that just wear you down. Basically, a ride without rhythm. Once you get a few miles past Boulder Creek you finally get to the good stuff, the long climb up Highway 9, first to Waterman Gap and then on to Skyline. About 10 miles of relatively-serious climbing and dramatically less traffic than the valley floor.

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Downtown Swanton, a pleasant loop off Highway 1 just north of Davenport. It takes a couple of minutes to really get into a climb, but once you do, it's as if there is suddenly a purpose to your life, or at least a reason why you took the bike out of the garage that morning. Of course, the Highway 9 climb was just one segment of the ride; to get there, we first rode over Old LaHonda & Haskins Grade (Pescadero Road), then Cloverdale/Gazos Creek out to the coast, along with a fun detour through Swanton on the way to Davenport.

This was basically the [same ride we'd done on July 31st](#), with only two minor changes. Just prior to Davenport, we made a left turn onto "Cement Plant Road" to see if it made sense to bypass half a mile or so of Highway One, including its notoriously-bad railroad crossing, in favor of a more-scenic cruise past the cement plant. It doesn't. Choppy pavement and a "scenic" view of the cement plant. Who knew. The second change was detouring off Highway One in Santa Cruz itself, heading up to King Street, which parallels Highway One for a mile or so. That seemed like a good idea, but it, too, was a failure. King Street isn't well-maintained, has too many stop signs, and numerous speed bumps. Will stick to Highway One for future rides.

Noise. Has anyone else noticed just how noisy Highway One is? It's not just the traffic, but the type of pavement. Was it always that way? I don't recall Highway One being quite so bad back in the day! Or maybe I was just so darned fast then that I didn't spend so much time on it.



Kevin showing off his tie-dyed (ok, salt-stained) jersey at Saratoga Gap

Food? The regular stop at Davenport's Whaler Cafe for croissants, cookies & cokes, and then another stop in Boulder Creek for those huge 23oz cans of Arizona Ice Tea. That's probably twice as much as advisable, even on a hot day, as you end up drinking something with too much sugar and zero electrolytes, not a good idea on a warm day (87 degrees at that point). Oh, right, I also have to admit that we stopped at the top of Highway 9 (Saratoga Gap) for a Pepsi and a hot dog. Yes, a hot dog. Guilty.

Regarding Kevin's salt stains on jersey & shorts, he probably would have done better had he not displaced Cytomax that he should have been drinking with that huge Arizona Ice Tea. His climbing speed up Highway 9 suffered a bit from that, but the important thing was being fast enough to make it to Saratoga Gap before Mr. Mustard pull up stakes and left.

114 miles, 9200ft of climbing, cool along the coast (but never below 62, even with the fog) and not-quite-hot inland. A nice summer day for a nice summer ride.