

Chris suggested Bear Gulch but didn't show?



Steep with a view to die for

With Kings Mtn a mess of gravel, tar & oil, we took Chris's suggestion (from a comment he made here two days ago) to do Bear Gulch, one of Skyline's notorious dead-end roads. But at 7:45am, where was Chris? Kevin, Marcus, Eric, Syl, Mike & Jan were there, but no Chris.

The new route took us out to the base of Kings but instead of heading up the hill, we made the left turn at Tripp and did something few ever do- we climbed 84. Yes, we rode up the east side of 84 (from Woodside) and it really wasn't that bad. Not too many cars, and we got strung out single-file pretty darned quickly anyway. For about a mile I had hope of hanging on, but I finally lost the wheel in front of me and arrived maybe a minute after the fast guys. The grade is so shallow on 84 that it's pretty fast and almost fun. I can only imagine how fast the Tour of California guys rode up it.

But from Sky Londa the fun came to an abrupt halt. I don't know of anyone, anywhere, who will say they enjoy the ride north on Skyline from Sky Londa. It's just one of those obnoxious grades that you can't sink your teeth into, or develop a rhythm. It just has to be endured, and endure we did, up to the intersection with Bear Gulch.



Left to right, Marcus, me, Jan, Kevin, Syl & Eric at the gate on Bear Gulch

Bear Gulch. One of Skyline's three notorious dead-end roads, all flowing down the west side and ending at gates that prevent you from enjoying an alternative route to the coast (thank you, Neil Young). The first couple miles of Bear Gulch are similar to a one-lane version of the top of Tunitas, with Kevin riding off the front a bit, acting as our early-warning system for oncoming traffic (of which there is a surprising amount on this little road). You just tune your ears for the sound of crunching carbon when he's out of sight around the corner. Soon the forest ends and you get a beautiful sweeping vista of the coast mountains and ocean, which you could actually enjoy if you didn't have to ride your brakes so hard on the nearly-20% grade!



Climbing back up Bear Gulch a mile or so of that and boom, you almost literally run into the gate at the end. After taking the obligatory pictures (one of the very few you'll ever see with myself in the photo) it was time to turn around and discover, as expected, that a 20% grade is even worse going up than down. From the top we simply rode back the same way we came, finishing the ride about 8 minutes later than normal, about half a mile shorter than normal, and 200ft more climbing than normal. We're making an assumption here that "normal" is what we've done, without fail, every Tuesday & Thursday morning for the last

20+ years, knowing full well that many, perhaps most, wouldn't think a "normal" person would do that. Chris, you missed a good ride!