

The hills were alive today!



Water spraying off Kevin's rear wheel

The planned ride was a simple concept, really. Head out in the worst storm to hit in a year or so and slog it out to the coast and then back via Tunitas. It sounded like a dumb idea, thus it sounded like something we'd do. Only it took a while getting going this morning (no big surprise there!) and by the time we finally got out, at noon, or was it 1pm?, the sun came out! The roads were soaked, but the skies were gradually clearing up and rain didn't seem to be in the mix. Nevertheless we were prepared for whatever might come our way, with booties, thermal tights, plastic rain jackets, appropriate gloves and our rain bikes.



Highway 84 closed by downed powerlines

Heading up over Jefferson we came across Michael from our Redwood City store; pure happenstance that he would be riding over Jefferson at exactly the same time we were! He wasn't up for a 3-4 hour ride though (other commitments) so he rode with us as far as Skyline & 84 before turning back ("us" being myself and Kevin).

A Sheriff blocked us from heading west on 84; there were power lines down just west of Skyline, and mudslides below that. Kevin thinks OK, let's head north on Skyline then and head home on Kings. What????!!! That would only be about 25 miles and not all that much climbing, and descending Kings when wet? No fun. So I talk him into heading south on Skyline and riding west on Old LaHonda, hoping that would put us below the power line issue (it did) and maybe the mudslide(s) were something we could get around (they weren't).



Waiting for section of 84 to be cleared of mud

We hit another Sheriff (not literally) about 2 miles east of LaHonda, where a good chunk of the hillside had come down. A grader and skip loader were going to be on the scene for another 40 minutes according to the Sheriff, but it looked like they were going to be done quite a bit sooner than that so we gambled and waited... and won. 12 minutes later and we were on our way, riding gingerly across some pretty slick muck, but thinking back on it, there were a lot of opportunities to lose traction but our bikes didn't let us down. Well, not Kevin's bike anyway. Mine? I had to stop several times heading up West Alpine to clear debris out from between my front tire and brake. Kevin wasn't having such issues; possibly my slightly-wider tire, combined with less clearance on the fork, was causing the trouble. Or maybe I was just looking for an excuse to stop on a steep grade.



Cutting up and hauling away a large tree that had closed West Alpine

Oh, right, the ride was supposed to go up Tunitas and now we're on West Alpine. It sounded like there were too many opportunities for road closures heading to the coast, and who knows what Tunitas might have been like (although truthfully, I was really looking forward to the climb up Tunitas under less-than-ideal conditions). Our timing was good; had we been on West Alpine much earlier, we would have been held up by a large tree that had fallen across the road (which was in the process of being cut up and hauled away as we came through).



The sun makes a strong appearance on West Alpine

The sun really came out about halfway up West Alpine, with the clean air providing some of the nicest views of the coastal hills ever. Unfortunately I didn't bring my "real" camera with me (didn't want to risk it getting soaked), plus we were chasing the sun and couldn't spend much more time stopped than we already had. Plus, it was looking not-so-nice up on Skyline, with a heavy fog rapidly moving in. Thankfully, the fog & low clouds lasted only for a short time as we headed north on Skyline. A good thing; even with a pretty good set of flashing tail lights, being up there in the fog isn't exactly the safest place for a bike to be. I'd even toyed with the idea of heading down Page Mill instead, but that would have added a fair amount of time getting home.

In the end it wasn't a very long ride (44 miles) or a particularly hilly ride by our standards (4500 ft of climbing). But it definitely felt like a hard ride regardless. Sure wish my rain bike rode as well as my Madone!