

My Madone never felt so good as it did this morning

The six or seven rides Kevin and I did on our Bike Fridays in France were awesome; I wouldn't trade them for anything. But riding a 21 pound steel bike that's designed to fit into a suitcase, loaded down with packs filled with camera gear and food and extra clothing to deal with expected (and unexpected) weather... it's just not the same. You get used to it; used to riding in what I call "mule" mode, a bit slower than normal. How much slower? I can finally quantify differences in climbing speed, thanks to Strava. On my 16 pound Carbon fiber Trek Madone, I can do a bit better than 3000ft/hour. On the Bike Fridays, loaded down, about 2200.

How much of that difference is from the bikes, vs the extra gear? Our pre-France test ride up Tunitas a few weeks ago showed it to be about 8% for the bikes alone. Not too bad. And on flatter terrain, considerably less.

But it sure felt great getting that 8% back! I need that much, and could have used more, getting up for the regular 7:45am Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride, after having gotten home last night at 9:30, completing a 23-hour nearly-sleepless trip back from France. And y'know, while France is spectacular in its variety of roads to ride and things to see, it still blew me away looking at the coast from west Old LaHonda, noticing a light scattered fog just above the surface, and marveling at how, despite seeing that view hundreds of times, it never gets old.