

A nice loop but you can't get there from here. Or shouldn't.



What would you do for a view like this, a road like this, a day like this?



This doesn't look like a 20% grade, but it is. And the surface doesn't look like a scare-ad for zit cream, but it would do the job.

Sometimes what looks so nice & fun on a map turns out to be something entirely different. D26. D226. D713. If you find yourself climbing on D26, turn back. Unless you're on a mountain bike with really low gears. It starts out as this idyllic little road, winding its way along a fast-moving creek, picturesque in every way. Kind of like the beginning of the log ride at Disneyland.

And then it turns bad. So bad and so steep I couldn't even take photos. Yes, it takes your breath away because nobody could maintain normal breathing when the road kicks back at you with a 20% grade and the pavement becomes more pothole than asphalt. Kevin had to walk his bike because he couldn't keep his balance; where the pavement was remotely passable, this was the one time I had the advantage. When the pavement was good, but the road steep, Kevin just rode on ahead, and for the first time in a very long while, I wasn't just breathing heavily, I was wheezing.

Just so you know, this is one of those roads that goes way up in the hills to those houses you see where you wonder what the road must be like to get there. You wonder if the roads are paved and the climbs, they must be fun, right? Because all climbs are fun, right?



Worth it to get this picture? Ask me tomorrow.

If you really want to get up there, a bit over 1000ft above the valley floor, take it from the D713 side, ride it to the top, and turn around **and head back the same way**. Oh, but you're the type that thinks no problem, Mike & Kevin are wimps, I can do this. Well maybe you can. But if you try to ride it all, you'll likely end up with shredded tires and still find yourself having to get off the bike in a couple of places.

Was it worth it? Heck yeah. Just because it gives me something to write about. For now, time to get things in order for our first Tour de France intercept, tomorrow, on the Port du Bales. A beyond-category climb that we've done a couple times before, so I don't expect to be thrown anything I can't handle. Then again, I didn't think a little 14 mile ride could do that today!