

## La Honda

One thing I want to get off my chest. We never get to La Honda. This ride was misnamed before I joined the group. The place we stop for lunch is Skyline or Skylonda, depending on the map you use. There -- done.

It was a glorious day for riding. You could see the faraway hills with absolute clarity. The temperature could have been just a notch or two warmer as we were aiming for the coast. We had a total of nine bikes -- all regulars! -- with Kory Rivera, Mark McCoy, Greg Leopold, Skip Moffatt, Gary and Beth Helm, Frank White, Ed Buckner, James Mickens, and myself.

I hoped I would be able to make the whole ride. I was real tired from a rough Saturday. We started off with Frank covering the tail gunner spot with his bright orange vest. That and Kory's bright lime-green vest made it real easy for me to know we had everyone. Thank you both. Well the start of this route is 90 minutes of freeway with Hwys 80, 580, 880, and 92. I actually had a hard time keeping the speed up to my usual 67 mph. We had one bit of traffic clog right at the Oakland airport, then it thinned back out. My first goof of the day was when I missed the Winton exit -- tired, asleep, bored -- pick a reason. So I led us onto 92 and we took the Hesperian exit. A tiny u-turn got us to the gas station. I think this is a better way to go with the gas station so close to 92. I needed the rest and a chance to wake up. We gathered bridge fares and took off. I could almost hear the twisties calling me.

We finally got to the twisties on Hwy 92 as we started up the hills. And as usual, traffic kept us well below the speed limit on these sweet, sweet turns. Once on Hwy 35, I pulled the group over and made sure they all knew to watch their mirrors and to look out for crud on the road. Once rolling again, James sped around us to enjoy the twisties. I found out later he was foiled by slow cars. I led the group keeping myself to mild, mild sparky speeds -- just too tired. We came up behind a two-up biker at a modest closing rate. I expected, hoped, that he would move over and let us roll on by. It was not to be. This jerk stayed to the left of the lane, hit his throttle hard every straight, and all but came to stops in the turns or if there was a bicycle on the side. I would have passed him had I been alone, but I knew the group wouldn't be able to get around him. And there was a car in front of him, not going that much faster than him. Frustrating. He did not respond to gentle horn beeps, flashing lights, etc. Fill in the blanks as to what I was calling him inside my helmet. “\*#&#\*#&\*! #&\*!” will suffice.

We finally made it to Alice's and the group split. Some went into Alice's to sample their fine fare while others wandered across the road to the deli with me. I had a simple sandwich and soda. It sat well enough and gave me an uplift in my spirits and energy.

The number and variety of bikes and cars there on a weekend is a show worth the ride. Old bikes from pristine to ratty. New bikes from stock to wild. Hot and fast to mild and mellow. There were Ferraris, Porches, hot rods, Vettes, and even a Bugatti Veyron. Eye candy was there, whatever your taste was.

We gathered and took some group photos before heading on down the road. No traffic finally. So I enjoyed running at a smooth, mildly sparky speed. We hit Alpine Rd and I pulled the group over and warned them that the road was very, very narrow and twisty and to behave -- and that included me.

Off we rode on this glorious and marvelous road (Skip will disavow any appreciation of this road). I rode trying to be as mellow and mild as I could, both on braking and throttle usage. Even so, I found my footpegs touching often enough. And I would look back and see at least three riders still in my sight. Couldn't see any farther back. At the first intersection where there could be a navigational problem, I stopped the group and allowed all to gather up. Still had everyone.

These twisties require all your attention. The road surface was mildly rough and dusty at points. Tree litter added to the intensity. The unmarked hairpins, the long forever turns, the ups, the downs, the occasional one really narrow lane all required focus. Then add a car or two coming the other way and you get the idea. But this was manna to me. Seven and a half miles of sheer bliss.

We made the turn onto Pescadero Rd. Sigh. I was now feeling much better. This road is still very twisty, but it is wider, smoother, and gentler. I settled into a mild sparky pace and enjoyed the scenery. Time for bucolic twisties. We made it to Stage Rd and took a nice break in the mega metropolis of Pescadero.

When we finally left, we rode through downtown and onto a fun road. And yes, even I say this is a rough road. But it gave us nine miles to ourselves off of Hwy 1. The last mile or so of this road is beyond sweet and smooth and wide and twistie. Wonderful. But way too short. Boom. There was Hwy 1.

We turned onto Hwy 1 and enjoyed the ocean views at a mild, but mostly steady 55. The wind was kicking up briskly from time to time, but mostly it was a good steady push from the left. We took a short gas stop in Half Moon Bay before beginning the trek through thick traffic. It was hard to completely enjoy the views while watching for red lights and cars, but I snapped quite a few sweet mental pictures.

Then we were on a freeway section of Hwy 1 and moving again at a good pace. I moved us over to the right lane as we got closer to the Skyline Blvd exit. And the car in front of us braked hard and swerved. WHOA! There was a huge, huge pile of debris in the road. I waved my hand above my helmet in warning and skirted the danger to the left. Once passed it, I used my mirrors to will everyone safely through. All safe. Amazing.

Once on Skyline, things settled down. Not the wind though. We made the left onto the Great Hwy through the busy stop sign in twos and gathered on the other side. This section of road has those annoying timed lights that keep you just below the speed limit. But given the sand all over, the slower speed was fine.

We took our last break at the Beach Chalet. We used the facilities and scanned over the tiny museum -- and hid from the strong, sandy breeze. When we left here, I was looking for Fulton Rd. I had a typo in my instructions. I had 1.1 miles and it should have been just .1 miles. So I started looking too late. I never saw it. Once I realized I had goofed yet again this day, I formulated a plan of three rights off of Geary to make the left onto 25th. It worked and we made our way onto the Golden Gate without much ado.

Now we had an hour of freeway to cover on our way home. Hwy 101 right at the bridge is narrow and filled with lots of big wide cars and trucks. But it settles out after Sausalito into just normal freeway. Hwy 37 was running at speed until just passed the raceway, where we waved goodbye to James. Now we were on Hwy 80 and for some reason, my bike wanted to go faster. It was hard to hold it back.

I made it home, at the end of a great day. Very few bugs on the bike. Nice. I climbed off my bike and all but crawled to my comfy chair -- well, once I allowed my overly loud dogs to get their glee at my homecoming out of their system. I was one whipped, tired, happy rider. Nice day.