

Occidental

It was a great day, with early morning coastal fog and temps expected to be in the mid 80's to low 90's. We had 7 bikes show up with Kory Rivera, Greg Leopold, Frank White, George Schjelderup, Mark McCoy, Gary & Beth Helm, and myself.

We started out with Mark holding the tail gunner spot -- thank you. The ride out to Gordon Vly Rd was mellow. Once we got on Wooden Vly Rd, I tried to be mellow. I tried to keep it at or under 55. I would look down and see 65. Dang! I would slow. Again, my speed crept up. We got to Monticello and headed for the corners. Again, I tried to be mellow, but soon felt my boots touching in the left turns...then the right. Try as I may, I could not keep from riding sparky. Even so, each time I looked in my mirrors, the group was there. Bunch of yahoos, all of us. We had one big truck, out of control, cross the line into out lane, forcing a lot of us to use just the right side of our lane. All got through safely.

We took a break at the corners. Now even the gas station store is closed. No place for snacks or drinks. Dang. Heading out on 128, I was finally able to keep my speeds at a mellow pace. The quick run on Silverado Trail led us to Pope St and the slow crawl through St Helena. Hwy 29 was not nearly as jammed and slow as usual.

I pulled the group over once on Spring Mountain Rd and talked with each rider to make sure they understood the very technical 12 miles ahead. I let each rider who wanted to ride ahead. Greg, a first timer for this road, availed himself and he put his new KTM through it's paces. I really reminded Mark to take it real easy with his Rune, our lowest, heaviest sled of the day. I took off third or fourth and behaved myself -- somewhat. The road is a major joy with constant turns, left and right, up and down, in shaded tree corridors, out in the open sun, rock cliffs to the side, trees to the other, narrow, tight...just fun. Greg wanted to just go back and forth on this road a few dozen times and call it a day. Mark, while enjoying the road, was more reserved. He had to work his bike through roads it was not designed for.

Once everyone was rested and calm, we headed out. We rode into and through Santa Rosa at the speed limit and making sure not to run any of the numerous red lights. We made our first gas stop and took a good break. Even though lunch was just 15 miles away, I got a soda (needed) and candy bar (not so much needed, but...).

We hit our first bit of slow traffic on Fulton Rd and the top run of Occidental Rd. They all turned off as we crossed Hwy 116. For once, in a long time, we had a clear run on the good part of Occidental Rd. We did run into a car just as we got near town, but even he wasn't that slow.

We ate at Negri's and the service was friendly and the food was good. This is one of those places that does not allow individual checks. So we had to do 'major financing' to figure everything out. We took photos out in the parking lot.

We headed up Coleman Rd and the road really got narrow. Greg and Gary and Beth split from the group at Joy Rd and aimed for the coast. We five hit the rough surfaces of Joy Rd. It smoothed out in places, but we had to keep speeds down due to slimy looking moisture on the road in places.

We got onto Bodega Hwy and here is where I had to concentrate to hit each turn. I designed this portion of the route to avoid the major traffic coming into Petaluma. It does do that and also provides plenty of gentle, pastoral sights. But, the turns are not obvious. I cheated and looked in my mirrors using Frank's turn signals to confirm I was right. He was using his GPS. It worked. As we got into town, Frank diverted us -- or I messed up and he re-aimed us. I let him lead. But, he made it through a light that trapped the rest of us. I honked, but he must not have heard. He rode away and out of sight. We got onto D St and from there I knew our way out.

We four stopped one more time at Lakeville and 101 for gas and snacks. When we were ready to go, George had already left. So the three of us headed out. With the exception of Stage Gulch Rd, we encountered traffic all the way home. The temperature was still not overly hot. One nice day of riding.