

Markleeville

We had a total of 4 bikes at the parking lot in the morning with Bruce Campbell, Frank White, Ed Buckner, and myself. We were expecting to pick up a couple of riders enroute: Sachim Brahme and Rodney Rounds (first time with the group). It was a slightly overcast morning with expected highs in the 90s. Frank and Bruce were expected to leave us in Jackson as they had other plans.

The ride up Hwy 80 to 50 was mild and boring. We got off the freeway and onto the 2-lane Hwy 16. We soon spotted Sachim and we pulled over long enough for him to get on his bike and rolling. We made the first stop at Rancho Murieta, where we found Rodney waiting. After a nice butt break, we continued on into Jackson. The road started gently adding twists in the small rolling hills. At Jackson, Frank kept rolling, while we stopped for gas. I got a few photos before we took off. Bruce headed off his way. I hope both Bruce and Frank had a nice ride home.

Now the real fun started as we get onto Hwy 88 heading uphill. Traffic was mostly going at speed or moved over at convenient spots, so we were able to enjoy the road's twisties. We took a couple of stops to enjoy the great scenery. While there was snow still visible on the peaks of some of the mountains, none was near the road. The grasses had mostly turned brown. Spring was long gone. As expected the altitude robbed our bikes of power as we climbed. But unexpectedly, Sachim's 250 Ninja kept up with me just fine -- unless I powered out of a turn.

After 70 miles of gentle fun, we rolled into Markleeville and got gas at the single, expensive pump. We then rolled one short block to the Wolf Creek Restaurant. The service was a bit slow and the waitress got Ed's order wrong -- and didn't correct it! Otherwise, the food was good and the ambience was mellow. I think next time, we will use the diner in Kirkwood instead, like on the dry run.

We suited up after eating and photos, and we aimed for the real good stuff -- the top of Hwy 4! The road got tighter and narrower and even higher. The road surface is mostly smooth. You had to behave -- well sort of -- as there was debris in some turns and oncoming traffic. As much as I tried to behave, I did touch my boots on both sides. We took a stop at a wide spot and rested and took more photos. At the top of Ebbetts Pass, I stopped the group to get photos at 8730 feet. At .4 atmospheres, there is not much air up there.

On the way down, we stopped at Alpine Lake and enjoyed the pleasant views and soft breezes. Alas, as we started downhill, we ran into traffic that had no idea what common courtesy of the road is all about. We got into Angels Camp and got gas, drinks, and snacks. The ride up Hwy 49 was mellow and mostly free of traffic. We even got to run the downhill esses coming out of Mokelumne Hill and into Jackson at speed. Oh, can you say whee?! Of course you can. I spent a long time leaned over and dragging my boot heels and peg feelers. We rolled through Jackson and I took the correct route into Ione -- yeah! After resting at the usual gas station, we took off down Hwy 104. Sachim and Rodney took Irish Hill Rd towards Sac, while Ed and I kept our bikes aiming for Walnut Grove. The run down Hwy 160 was pleasant. We took one more stop at Rio Vista before facing the dreaded, messed up Hwy 12. Made it home near 7:30 -- just a short ten and a half hour day.