

Mt. Hamilton

We had a total of 7 bikes for the ride with regulars Frank White, Skip Moffatt, Larry Jackson, Mark McCoy, James Mitterer, Byron Hom, and myself. New to the group was Bruce Dowell. We left Fairfield with Mark covering the tail gunner spot (thank you). The day was slightly overcast, a bit cool, and a lot windy as we started out.

The ride down Hwy 80 and 680 was mellow, and would have been boring if it wasn't for the wind. The wind settled out after we crossed the bridge. Finally we got off the freeway in Danville. We started having some mild twisties as we got onto El Cerro. The road turns rural for a few miles before again becoming city near the Blackhawk Auto Museum. We took our first stop, where Bruce and Byron join us. I had to do some math as I forgot to zero out my trip odometer – making my job of knowing where the turns were real hard. Now all I had to do was read my own hand writing.

Once out of the city confines, we were given some gentle mountains and fields to watch as we rolled toward Hwy 580. The signal lights on the transition roads in Pleasanton caused us to get separated a couple of times, but nothing bad. The road finally got us near to Hwy 680, where I was waiting for the far right lane exit. It came sooner than I anticipated, so I was not able to use my usual hand signals to warn the group. Thankfully we all did fine.

Then we were on Calaveras Rd. This is a fun, tight, narrow road, mostly smooth and clean. We took a short butt break here before turning on Fetter Rd and heading down into San Jose for gas and lunch. We ate at KFC. The food was better than some of the dives we hit, but yes greasy. The service was faster than most, if not all, the places we stop at.

Then we headed into Alum Rock at the base of the mountain, where again we got separated by the dang signal lights. But soon enough we were headed up the mountain. Here was tight, narrow, twistied road – a motorcyclist's delight. Well, that is if you don't have low floor boards dragging in every turn. The switch backs, pot holes, road wrinkles, and debris made for heads up riding, while the views demanded your eyes. Here we ran into seriously slow (15-20 mph slow) traffic, but they mostly moved over without too much ado. We took a nice long stop at the observatory and took in the 'tour'. Tour may not be the right word. It is a walk down the long hall from the gift shop to the refractive telescope room and then we listen to a gal talk. It is interesting none the less. We skipped the self guided 'tour' to the 120" telescope.

Leaving the mountain top, we rolled down the hill to some more narrow, twistied road and great views. After a stop at the Junction, we headed up Mines Rd. I held myself to a max of 45 mph to keep the group tighter. Yes, 45 is fast for some turns and I had to slow down, but for most of the time it was very mellow. We dodged a lot of squirrels, birds of various sizes, and road debris. One 6-8" sized stone came crashing down right along side me, but did not roll out onto the road. I even saw a squirrel duck into a hole in the road. As I passed, all I saw was a deep black hole.

Alas, the good road comes to an end and we roll into Livermore for gas, snacks, and rest. Some riders followed Frank to Brentwood and home. Bruce took 580 to home. Skip and Byron followed me out to Morgan Territory Rd. Morgan Territory Rd has three distinct sections. The first is nicely paved, up and down, twistied, but with houses – you have to behave. Then the stretch along the creek is real tight, with blind turns, and is rough as any road we travel on – again you have to behave. Even though you are going slow (15-25 mph) it is intensely challenging as you must stay tight to your side to avoid problems with any oncoming traffic, watch for road problems, and still enjoy the great scenery. Then the last stretch is smoother, wider, and with gentler turns – finally a bit of a chance to let loose. The recent fires were not visible from the road, nor did we smell any of the ashes.

Then we got onto Marsh Creek Rd and into Walnut Creek for our last rest stop. Byron left for 680 south and Skip and me headed for 680 north. It was a nice day with a nice group.

I got an email from Frank saying the route into Brentwood was straight through and nice except for the odd turnabout to get from Hwy 4 to 160.