

NM-Colorado Tour, June 21-25, 2016, 275 miles, 15,170 ft. climbing

Ride Leaders, Tom Sullivan and Will Ferrell

Before I describe the ride, I would like to thank Cindy and Steve Post for the wonderful support they gave us. For without them this trip would not have been as great as it was. Cindy drove the fast sag with one half the luggage and setup the food stops along the way. She also bought supplies at overnight stops. Steve drove the slow sag with more luggage and food items. He followed along with the slower riders and was never more than five miles away. Fees collected for the ride paid for the food, gasoline for sag vehicles, hotel rooms for the drivers and a thankyou dinner for them. I would also like to thank Joe Redmond for offering the use of his Chevrolet Tahoe as the second sag.

When we left Red River at scheduled 9:15 am (we're not in Albuquerque and start times do not have to be on the hour) we had a four mile, 1,160-foot climb up to 9,820-foot Bobcat Pass. After about three miles the slope lessened and were met by Cindy at the top for our first rest stop. From there it was 17-mile descent to Eagle Nest for another rest stop. We continued downward for another 24 miles to Cimarron at 6,000 feet. On the way many spotted a Sea Serpent near the Elizabeth town ruins. The road had good shoulders when available and very light traffic. Dinner in Cimarron was at the St. James Hotel, arrangements were made by Martha.

Day two brought us to Raton. At our first stop out of Cimarron at mile 25 the winds started blowing out of the northeast at up to 20 mph., the same direction we were travelling. After 10 miles of head wind and getting onto I-25, several of the slower riders decided to sag into Raton. The six mile climb up to Raton Pass would be daunting with the strong head winds, so a few got sagged to the top. The stalwarts made it to the top under pedal power where they met the sagged riders. The talk in Cimarron was how fast the 11-mile descent to Trinidad would be, up to 40 mph. That did not happen, upon coasting we were able to make 16 mph and when the slope lessened, we had to pedal downhill. Once in Trinidad the town was reconnoitered for a place to have dinner. Nothing was found. Using his cell phone and Yelp, Joe Redmond was able to locate Rios Italian restaurant and arranged for all seventeen of us to have dinner. Their wait staff provided vocal entertainment and the meals were good. Breakfast was at McDonalds a few blocks from the hotel.

We now had a 67 mile ride to La Veta with a 50 mile, 6,000-foot climb up Cucharas Pass at 9,995 feet. Along the way we passed many old coal mining towns. There was an exposed coal seam alongside the road. At mile 7 we passed through Cokedale and saw rows of coke ovens. The first rest was at mile 21 in the town of Weston. The New Elk Coal Mine was at mile 29 followed by Stonewall at mile 33. Stonewall is 250-foot-high rock wall formation that is miles long jutting upward and is part of the Dakota Sandstone Formation. The second stop at mile 37 was at Monument Lake. At mile 41 we rode around North Lake. Then the grade increased considerably. Just before the top we encountered a 1-mile, 11% grade. After taking some documentary photos we had a 17-mile descent to La Veta. Some of us stopped in the town of Cuchara on the way down and stopped in at the "Dog Bar." Continuing downward we passed the Dakota Wall, the Devil's Stairsteps and the Profile Rock. Our first choice for a motel was the La

Veta Inn, but it was undergoing renovation and we made arrangements at another place. Well a few days before the ride, our reservations got transferred to The Lava Inn. The renovation was still ongoing and we took all of the rooms that were almost finished. Mine had plastic cloths and empty paint cans in the closed. Slow bathtub drain. The wall mural was unfinished. Restaurant not opened. I tasked Joe Redmond to find us a place to have the Thank You dinner. Well he came through when he found Alys' Restaurant and got us reservations for 17 for 5:30 pm. on the patio. We got moved inside before seating when it started to rain. All dinners were the same price. A few entrées, prime rib, swordfish steak. Alys's also has an extensive wine list. A great dining experience for such a small town. Breakfast the next day was at a local bakery and a very small short-order-cook Diner.

Leaving La Veta for the 9,614-foot La Veta pass the wind gods must have been very angry with us. A strong head wind out of the west as we climbed 13 miles to the top and our first stop. This was followed by a 21-mile downhill into the wind to Ft. Garland for another stop at a turn. One would think that when we turned south we would have a cross wind, oh no it was still a strong head wind. Must have been a northeast wind all along. Needless to say, we struggled the last 16 miles to San Luis. No more up and down, just flat. Now a real test for Joe Redmond. Find us a place to eat. We were informed by Barbra&Greg who started the ride in San Luis that there would be slim pickings. Mrs Rios Restaurant next to the motel was open for dinner, but opens at 9 am for breakfast. Much too late for us early morning cyclists. Barbra&Greg informed us that they were able to get a breakfast burrito at a gas station. But now there would be 15 of us wanting breakfast. Well Joe worked his magic again. Mrs. Rios Restaurant accommodated us for dinner and Joe got them to open at 7:30 for breakfast on a Saturday morning. Dinner service was a little slow, one waitress/cashier, one cook and an assistant. Breakfast had one cook/waiter/cashier and two more in the kitchen.

The last day back to Red River was mainly flat for 38 miles to Questa and then a gentle uphill climb of 1,200-feet in 12 miles. Our first stop was at the state line where we were greeted by a "Welcome to New Mexico" sign. Upon continuing the head winds began again, but not as strong as on previous days. Our next stop in Questa was at the turn to Red River so no one miss the turn. Once back in Red River, everyone packed up their cars and headed home.

With a cumulative mileage of 3,991 or 7,982 tire-miles one might expect a few flats. Well there was one flat at the start of the last day and one cut tire. The only other bicycle problem was a minor gear adjust done at a bicycle shop in Trinidad.

Ask these fellow club members about how they enjoyed the ride. They were all participants. Barbara Titus, Bill Thompson, Cindy Post, Gary Shaw, Greg Titus, Jim Fordice, Joe Redmond, John Gillett, John Sturtevant, Martha Rosenau, Patrick Roddy, Peter Marks, Richard Cullison, Rosalie Rayburn, Stephen Post, Thomas Sullivan and William Ferrell.

As pictures are submitted by the riders they will be posted to a public web site.

Here is a suggested ride for next summer. Five days, 304 miles and a lot of climbing. This ride was scheduled in 2013 but was cancelled because of forest fires and road closures along the route. Start in Saguache and ride to Creede. Next day go over 10,901-foot Spring Creek Pass and

continue the climb to 11,361-foot Slumgullion Pass on the way to Lake City. From there it's on to Gunnison for two nights with a side trip to Crested Butte for touristy things. On the fifth day, pedal over 10,149-foot North Pass back to Saguache. If anyone is interested in being the ride leader for this ride Tom can offer his help in getting you started.