

Engineers Road Discovery (Julian Area)

By: David Voris

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Distance: 60 miles

Participants: Jim Broder, Dave Voris, Jeff Cresap,

Start/finish: Santa Ysabel, CA

Weather: Clear, 70's, some gusty winds

Total Climbing: 6,000

Route: <http://www.bikely.com/maps/bike-path/Engineers-Road>



This was a trip of awesome discovery. Our original plan was to ride up from Santa Ysabel, through Julian and out to Mount Laguna, then back - a familiar trip to us, without a lot of anticipated adventure. However, during the ride we made a couple of changes that turned this into another epic trip.

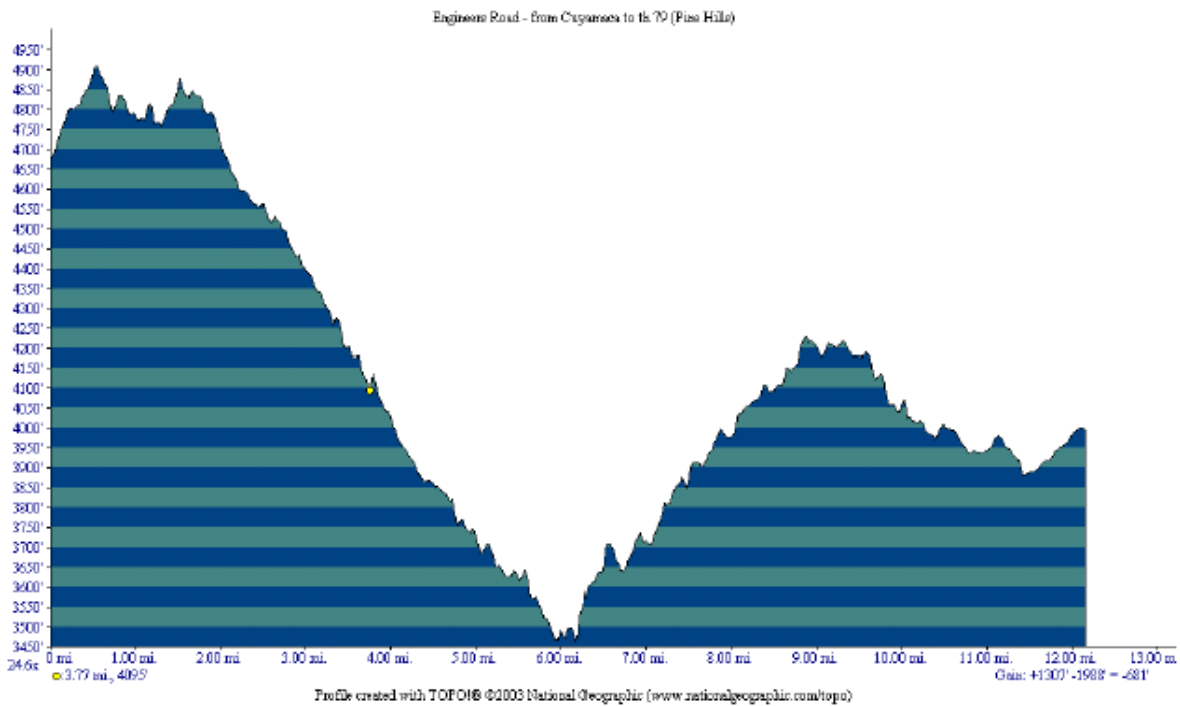
We took Wynola Road all the way to the intersection with Banner Grade and rode the last mile or so of the Banner Grade climb up into Julian. Banner Grade has mysteriously stayed out of the Descender repertoire. Perhaps it's the extreme temperature difference between the top and bottom, and it's difficult to get an early start at the bottom. Nevertheless, the road had new perfect asphalt, was sidelined with thick oaks, and the temperature was quite nice for September. But we elected to ignore the temptation of descending to the base of Banner Grade and back up (for now).

We took the 79 out of Julian to the Sunrise Highway. However, we had trouble keeping a straight line due to the strong cross winds on Sunrise Highway, so we had to retreat. Jeff suggested we try a road he heard of called Engineers Road that somehow connects Cuyamaca Lake to Julian, allowing us to bypass the busy 79. So we filled up at the Cuyamaca Lake shop, found the intersection and explored. No map, no info about climbing, no estimate of the distance, just a sense of adventure.

Engineers Road starts off with an immediate a 12% quarter mile section that welcomed us like a booby trap in the entry of the Temple of Doom. But the terrain soon turned into manageable rollers that overlooked the west county all the way to the Pacific Ocean. It was our own little road, few if any cars, and was a ridiculous crown jewel for cycling. Soon a descent began. It snaked its way through thick oaks, remote cabins, creek beds, and boulder formations. We had no idea that this steady twisting descent would go for 4.5 miles without a distraction. We had to wipe the bugs off our teeth from smiling so wide.

Of course you know what a 4.5 mile descent brings you. A climb. Not bad though – the climb was only about 3 miles of 6% grade with short relieving flat sections. Just enough to allow you to look up and remind yourself of how epic this road is. Navigation to Julian was easy and obvious. We had to guess at a couple of turns, but guessed correctly and ultimately found our way to Julian without any trouble. The route we took had a net altitude loss of 700 feet, so this road will be a chore going the other direction (From Julian to Cuyamaca Lake). It is an ideal out-and-back route. We concluded our day by descending and climbing Banner Grade, a first for Jim and me. Banner Grade had recently been resurfaced and was flawless for nearly 6 miles down to where it flattened out near the desert. It is a must for any climbing club, just check the weather first! We completed our ride with the usual reckless race down the great turns of Wynola Road, then down to Santa Ysabel. Here is the

elevation map for Engineers road – 12 miles long, 1300 feet of climbing (the direction we went) and 2000 feet of climbing the other direction. Find the exact route of Engineers Road on the URL above in Bikely.com.



Dave Voris posing up Banner Grade



Some well-deserved post-ride Julian pie and beer



Top Picture: Jim and Jeff on Engineers Road (or very near it). Note that there are 4 goats in this picture.