

## Whine Country (Fallbrook, Ca)

By: David Voris

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Distance: 70 miles

Number of turns on the route sheet: 56

Participants: Jim Broder, Mike Hodges, Dave Voris, Jeff Cresap, Rob Verfurth, Dave Guidotti

Start/finish: Apple Market in Bonsall, corner of 76 and S. Mission

Weather: Cloudy, then high 80's

Total Climbing: 8,000' best estimate

Route: <http://www.bikely.com/listpaths/srchkey/whine+country/country/254/region/126>



I learned of this ride in an email sent to a group distribution by a member of the Ranchos cycling/racing club named Lee Swarzano. "He" indicated by email that it would be a moderate pace, not the typical Ranchos "hammerfest", and we will regroup often. So I called on the Descenders to do a multi-club ride, see some new country, meet new riders, and enjoy the rolling hills of Fallbrook and De Luz. However, Jeff Cresap, the Descender's elder statesman with years of racing wisdom, reminded us that "boys will be boys".

As we gathered with 15 or so other riders at Apple's. One rider joined us who had an artificial leg – and was a great rider! The Descenders were the most represented club with 6. Five or so riders from the Ranchos were there, several from North County Bike Club, and some other civilians. Turns out Lee was a lady, and one of the best female riders I have ever ridden with. She was a delightful guide who got everyone through one of the hardest routes I have been on in the county.

It was beautiful country – few cars, tons of oaks and ranch properties with little quiet twisty roads. Mike said the mountain top views looked like Spain. After a 2 mile warmup we were immediately climbing. Then descending. Climbing, descending. As the ride progressed and we got out of town the climbs got steeper, as did the descents. We started moving into the high teens (gradient). The first 25 miles felt like 50. But all 6 of us hung in there. We would get strung out on the climbs, then aggressively catch up on the descents after working together as if we were in the mix the whole time. They don't call us the Descenders for nothing.

Then the sun came out. As did the warnings that the "big stuff" was ahead. We then started sampling the whines. It is hard to know exactly where we got seperated. Probably at the top of a hill that had no business sporting pavement. Two GPS gurus were debating whether that section was 22% or 25%. Then the descent. I felt like I was approaching a cliff. I was at 41 MPH in a matter of seconds. Then right back up another 15% in a tucked position. A few peddles in the big ring. Click. A few peddles in the middle ring. Crunch. Grind the chain along the cog. A few more peddles. Click, and I was back to the inside of my triple ring for more suffering.

The group thinned to about 8. It was hot. My head hurt. We lost Guido, Jeff, Jim and Rob which was concerning. Where the hell are we anyway? And how far to the next water – I am completey dry. The answer was "about 1 hour of really hard climbing to the next water spot". I think I had little tears. But you can't call a ride "epic" unless you cry at least once.

Ta da - our fairy god mother appeared. First, she brought to us an open firestation. I had to convince myself that it was not a mirage, then everyone stopped. Second, after we filled up, Guido showed up with Lee, who had been hearing all the riders. Third, Guido said the other 3 guys were given directions for a nice route back the the car, and they have a key. Dan DaRue, the relentless pace maker, didn't see us stop at the firestation, went on ahead then double-backed, and had to climb a 1/2 mile 15% grade twice. I think I saw him with a little tear too.

So back at it. Up up and away. It was even harder now, but I had a change in spirit. Guido was strong, Mike was strong, and I was hanging on. One section got so steep that Dan DaRue had to walk his bike (of course he probably had a 39/23). So I walked mine – as did several others. Mike made it on his peddles though. He looked strong.

The fairy god mother stayed with us from there. At mile 55 or so, Lee said the rest was just rolling hills. My spirits lifted again. After inhaling a bag of salty dorritos and a gatorade at a little shop in a Fallbrook, I was in the "mood". The group of 10 rode in an orderly pace line for several miles. Then Mike went to the front. My first reaction was "yoohoo, snap out of it boy". But he pulled for at least a mile, letting no one by. Right up the base of an 8% climb. He then faded to the back. I thought that was the end for poor old Mike. But the group acceleration didn't seem that bad this time. I was very comfortable. Mike floated back to the front again. And off he went. Alone. Up the hill. No one responded. So off I went too. I caught Mike's wheel and we enjoyed some great press time together. It then occurred to us we didn't know where we were going (there is a turn every mile in this ride), so we "let them catch up". We got our directions, then I led out a pull, and off goes Guido one a private attack. Again no response. So Mike and I caught up to Guido, more Descender press time.



We had broken things up so that there was two groups now. The three Descenders and two Ranchos in the front group. (I looked back and I think I saw one of the guys in the second group rolling his eyes and saying something like "let's all cheer for the warm down champions" or something). I just kept feeling better and better each surge, that I didn't want to let up. Mike and Guido felt the same. Mike and Dan (the Rancho) started another surge. Right as it turned upward, I sprinted from the back got some great "me" time. It went like this all the way back to the car, with Mike finishing with a great solo break, entering the parking lot first with a big smile.

Jeff Cesap: "I thought it was going to be a road bike ride. I think we were actually riding on paved mountain bike trails.... In my 30+ years of riding, I've never seen paved roads that steep....whine, whine, whine".