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The Tripper

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The Tripper Report for September - December 2012 (updated 6/12/2013)

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Methow Valley September 3rd to September 9th

Ride Director: Terry Karro, Report by: Merle Vogel Jr

Thank you Terry for introducing us to the Methow Valley. This valley is nirvana for outdoor people. There is hunting, fishing, cross country skiing, hiking and biking, both mountain and road in abundance. People here seem to do a little of all of it. We road biked of course and how beautiful it was. There were quiet roads with farms, fields, trees, mountains, wildlife, and water to delight us. The little towns were a delight too. Two of them, Mazama and Carlton consist of one store but Twisp and Winthrop had some very interesting stores, bakeries and restaurants, and a brew pub each.

The weather couldn't have been better. There were bright, sunny days with cool mornings and warm afternoons. We rode along the Methow, Chewuch, and Twisp rivers. One ride was to the top of Washington Pass. That wasn't enough for Gary. He rode down the other side and to the top of the next pass, Rainy Pass.

Local BACers, added to our enjoyment. Dean and Sheila Coe helped at the introductory social hour. Kathe and Greg Fowler hosted happy hour at their home on the hill overlooking Methow Valley. Rita Jensen and Gary Dodson joined us at the Fowlers. Rita and Gary were the original leaders of the Methow Valley ride. Terry hosted us at her own home for the final happy hour. Linda Brockway rode with us. Julie Muyliaert co- owner of Methow Valley Cycle and Sport joined us at one happy hour and led an inciteful discussion of cycling equipment and positioning.

Ride participants were: Darrell and Nancy Follett, Tom and Kristi Weir, Pete and Brenda Sands, Loren and Chris Dudley, Merle and Susan Vogel, Cindy Bryan, Jon Zuehlke, Sally Haas, Abby Linzie, Gail Ewart, Robert Deering, Michael Blake, Robert Lynn, Leona Muller, Gary Hsueh, and Steven Roberts.

P. S. Additional accounts off this ride. It can be viewed by surfing to <http://annbobblynn.com/BAC Methow Valley/index.htm>

or

<http://mvogel.com/Adventure2012/20120904/images/index.html>

Participants: Jon Zuehlke, Larry Sands, Leona L Muller, Kristi Weir, Tom Weir, Abby Linzie, Brenda Sands, Gary Hsueh, Cindy Bryan, Sally Haas, Gail Ewart, Susan Vogel, Merle Vogel Jr, Loren Dudley, Terry Karro, Nancy Follett, Darrell Follett, Robert Lynn, Christine Dudley, Robert Deering, Steven Roberts, Michael Blake

California Coast: San Francisco to Santa Barbara September 7th to September 17th

Ride Director: Larry Roe, Report by: Carole Milligan

The Central California coast from San Francisco to Santa Barbara is a special route, and one I have wanted to cycle for over 30 years. Our group was game!

Day 1: Pacifica to San Francisco: 42 miles, 3800'. Staying in Pacifica, south of San Francisco, we had a Saturday ride into the City, exploring Golden Gate Park, the Presidio, and the Golden Gate Bridge with Sausalito as an option, returning to Pacifica.

Day 2: Pacific to Santa Cruz: 67 miles, 2400'. We rode from Pacifica to Santa Cruz over Devil's Slide and through Half Moon Bay, hugging the coast.

Day 3: 46 miles, 650'. From Santa Cruz to Monterey, we were only briefly on Hwy 1 with its busy traffic, and mostly explored farm roads with fields of brussel sprouts and artichokes, as well as a bike path through the dunes as we arrived in Monterey at Fisherman's Wharf. The Monterey Aquarium was a side trip taken by some.

Day 4: Monterey to Big Sur: 46 miles, 2600'. Through Cannery Row long before the tourists arrived and onto the 17 Mile Drive, we wound through dunes dotted with cypress, famous for their windblown shapes. Seals swam and barked, otters played, and long formations of pelicans skimmed close to the water. Then we left the coast to roll up through redwoods to Big Sur, where we stayed at the Big Sur Lodge, with great accommodations and food.

Day 5: Big Sur to Ragged Point: 49 miles, 4250'. This was the "hardest" ride with 4250' of elevation gain, but it is also the classic part of the Central Coast as it rolls and climbs from Big Sur to Ragged Point with fog, clinging to rugged rock outcroppings jutting into the ocean, so all those hills were worth it. The isolated Ragged Point Inn had beautiful views and a good dining room.

Day 6: Ragged Point to Morro Bay: 48 miles, 1200'. Leaving the rugged coast behind, we rode along a beautiful, almost flat section of coast, with a stops for outstanding cinnamon rolls in Pismo Beach, a colony of elephant seals, San Simeon with Hearst Castle perched above, the small towns of Cambria and Cayucos where good food and coffee were available before we climbed up a hill to Morro Bay, a traditional fishing town, that was the last truly coastal town on this part of our ride.

Day 7: Morro Bay - Santa Maria: 54 miles, 1400'. Turning inland we cycled through very small farming towns to arrive in Santa Maria famous for its strawberry fields.

Day 8: Santa Maria - Solvang: 41 miles, 1950'. Warmer as we came inland further, we wove upwards through golden rolling hills, populated with California Live Oaks. Along the road were many well-known wineries, and more than one group stopped for a breather and, even possibly, for a taste.

Day 9: Solvang - Santa Barbara: 48 miles, 3000'. Entry to Santa Barbara from the north was over the challenging San Marcos pass, where we stopped briefly at the Cold Springs Tavern, the old stagecoach lunch stop on the route from Santa Inez to Santa Barbara. From the summit of the climb, there is a ripping downhill, initially on the main highway, followed by a turn onto the Old San Marcos Road with "hang onto your brakes" steep 330o switchbacks which drop one right down to sea level in no time. Then the route followed a series of bike routes and paths down to harbor where we stayed, had a group dinner, and said good-bye to those who were leaving or going on.

Participants: Larry Roe, John McManus, Brenda Cole, Julian Scott, Daisy McCabe-Lokos, Rachel Manno, Joan Roe, Barb Larsen, Leo Riegel, Carole Milligan, Jack Dysart, Robert Apsler, Miriam Joscelyn, Marlene Rawles, Henry Livingston, Debbie Livingston, Mark Berenson, Charlotte Patterson, Edward McFadd, Elizabeth Plunkett, Diane Sanchez Costello, Patrick Engstrom

Blue Ridge, Smokies and Cherokee Country September 11th to September 21st

Ride Director: Tom Leever, Report by: Hal Baas

A one word description of the tour requested of each participant: foggy, historic, rainy, airhorn, camaraderie, climbing, smoky(2), hard, educational(2), unrelenting, challenging, hillacious, remote, mystical, awesome, rhodies, smooth, climbation, caloric.

We met in Asheville, NC at the Four Points by Sheraton with Happy Hour camaraderie and delicious high caloric dinning. In the morning we started on a well-planned route out of busy Asheville and into the challenging ride toward Hot Springs NC. Early on, in a very remote area, we came upon Road Closed Ahead signs. The old bridge across a creek had been completely removed. The construction workers were friendly and allowed us to carry our bikes over fencing, along a muddy drop-off and across their narrow catwalk over the creek and through the construction area. After a long, hard climb and awesome downhill some of us stopped at a small cafe for the local hot dog with slaw before arriving at a quaint B&B. Generous refreshments, wonderful unique rooms and a terrific southern breakfast and we were on our way to Tennessee. Just before crossing the state line from North Carolina, many of us were given an enthusiastic send-off by countless country dogs on the rural road; full water bottles came in handy.

Arriving at a beautiful and luxurious Inn right on the water at Lake Douglas in Dandridge, named after Martha Dandridge Custis Washington the 1st First Lady of the U.S., we enjoyed happy hour on a spacious deck overlooking the marina and a southern BBQ dinner. An evening boat ride on the lake with the owner of the Inn was a free option.

The next day's ride to Townsend included a longer option with a short climb that was by far the most challenging of the hillacious tour. Two nights here enabled a loop ride into Cade's Cove, an immensely popular visitor destination with historical buildings and wildlife. By the 2nd night we had discovered Miss Lily's CafA©, a wonderful little boutique restaurant with everything homemade from fresh ingredients.

Did you know that it is apparently possible to install an actual TRAIN airhorn on a pickup truck? Unfortunately it does not come with the option of brains for the driver of the truck. Combined with drivers towing trailers from a car rally, a Harley rally, a Tennessee football crowd and a white supremacist convention, we had a 13 mile winding narrow uphill ride never to be repeated.

After museum visits and overnighting in Cherokee, NC we started on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Mystical fogginess, unrelenting hard climbs, some rain, smooth roads, and a minimum of traffic; beautiful beyond description. Rewarded with a stay at the historic Balsam Inn and then two nights at the Pisgah Inn in the Smoky Mountains National Park. Several options for 2nd day loop rides from the Pisgah Inn were enjoyed on a day of perfect weather, the beginning of fall color change and views that left no doubt where the name Smoky Mountains comes from. Then another great dinner to reload on all those calories we had burned off. The pumpkin soup is like eating a hot pumpkin pie with all the fixings out of a bowl.

A long, long downhill through seven mountain tunnels took us back the 35 miles to Asheville. Properly rated at 3B, this ride provided a real sense of accomplishment. The beautiful countryside, fascinating history, wonderful old Inns, good food and company made for a great adventure.

Participants: Julie Leever, Tom Leever, Eddie Flayer, Kerry McCarville, Jan Hansen, Kathy Patrick-Baas, Hal Baas, Jon Armao, Alexis Armao, Clarice Sackett, Chuck Jackson, Ruth Maule, Darrell Athay, Bruce Dewey, Marilyn Dewey, Rita Jensen, Gary Dodson, Phillip Coleman, Jim Bishop, Sharon Bishop, Charles McCarville

Zion and Bryce Parks Tour September 13th to September 21st

Ride Director: Spencer Ridings, Report by: Robert Morris

The BAC Southwest Utah Parks Tour 2012 officially began in St. George, Utah on September 14, but a number of participants came a day early to ride through Snow Canyon State Park. It was a beautiful short ride filled to the brim with wonderful southwest scenery and a chance to begin to acquaint ourselves with each other and the terrain. It would have been perfect had it not been for those pesky "goat head" thorns. We did experience a few flats along the way.

Sept. 14 was our first official day of riding. We rode from St. George to Zion National Park. It was a 55 mile ride with 3,081 vertical feet of climbing. We were all excited about the ride but nothing could prepare us for the beauty and awesomeness of Zion. We stayed in the facilities at the park which were appropriately rustic and very accommodating.

Sept. 15 was a lay-off day with unbelievable opportunities for hiking. I personally chose to hike to Angel's Landing. It was a difficult climb of over 4,000 feet with narrow paths assisted by chain rails in many of the steep spots. But once I arrived at the peak and relished the accomplishment, I soon began to center on the magnificent natural beauty. These hiking opportunities planned within the scope of the tour were a very nice addition.

Sept. 16 was a short ride of 31 miles with 2,671 vertical feet of climbing from Zion To Mt. Carmel, Utah . This was the only appropriate place to break up what would have otherwise been a 90+ mile day to Bryce Canyon. It was here that I ate a Navajo Taco replete with "fry bread". Yum! Yum!

On Sept. 17 we rode to Bryce Canyon National Park. The ride was 63 miles with 4,081 vertical feet of climbing. It was a tough day and my aching quads conceded to a complete intoxication wrought by the surrounding natural beauty.

Sept. 18 was a lay-off day at Bryce. The hiking opportunities were not only appropriate but vital to the overall memories of the tour. I found it especially rewarding to experience the early sunrise at Sunrise Point in 32 degree weather.

Sept. 19 we rode to Panguitch, Ut. which was a short day of 26 miles with only 689 feet of climbing. We used the remainder of this day relaxing and enjoyed a wonderful dinner at the Cowboy Cafe where the multiple choices of BBQ met everyone's desire.

On Sept. 20, we rode from Panguitch to Cedar City via Cedar Breaks National Monument. The ride was 58 miles with 5,354 feet of vertical climbing. The first 45 miles were mostly climbing with 10 miles of it at the 10,000 feet level. The air was thin. After departing Cedar Breaks the ride was mostly a welcomed downhill run into Cedar City, Ut.

On Sept 21, we rode 59 miles from Cedar City back to St. George with only 1,342 feet of climbing. What a ride! I traveled at 25+ mph for miles without turning the crank.

Sadly, our tour ended in St. George on Sept. 21, but oh what memories. Not only was the sense of personal accomplishment great (291 miles with 17,218 vertical feet of climbing) but the friendships attained and the mental capture of natural beauty will last a lifetime.

Thanks to Spencer and Karen Ridings for all of love's labor in leading this most wonderful bike tour I have ever experienced.

Participants: Michael Eunice, Ronald Guidotti, Bruce Schweitzer, Karen Ridings, Spencer Ridings, Richard Ellis, Marilyn Ellis, Vickie Romo, Karin Nelson, Albert Balingit, Jacquie Duerr, Janice Eunice, Martha Pullen, Barry Pullen, Robert Morris, David Lawrence, Marianne Benforado, John Monroe

California Coast: Santa Barbara to San Diego September 17th to September 24th

Ride Director: Larry Roe, Report by: Miriam Joscelyn

Eleven riders from the San Francisco to Santa Barbara tour were joined in Santa Barbara by eight additional riders for the trip to San Diego. The ride along the coast seemed easy to those of us who had climbed the coast further north. There were climbing options available for those wishing more of a challenge or a view from higher elevations.

The weather cooperated with sunny skies and cool ocean breezes while we rode. Santa Cruz and Anacapa Islands which are two of the islands that make up the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary were visible as we biked south to Ventura. We biked along the Malibu Coastline and there were opportunities to visit historical landmarks. When we reached Pepperdine University, there was a display of flags on their lawn commemorating 9/11. It was very moving to see them blowing in the sea breeze.

Biking through Santa Monica and Venice was easy on the bike paths that were on the beach and restricted to bicycles only. We heard and saw planes climbing into the sky for about half an hour as we biked west of LAX. After reaching the port of Los Angeles in San Pedro we put our bikes on a private water taxi for a boat ride to Long Beach. As we left the dock in San Pedro we spotted the USS Iowa which is being refurbished and turned into a museum. We arrived in Long Beach and saw the Queen Mary.

We biked along many trails and bike lanes on the Pacific Coast Highway as we continued south to Dana Point. As Mission San Juan Capistrano was within 4 miles of our motel, several of us biked on to see it. That day was also the arrival of the space shuttle Endeavour in Los Angeles. Some of our cyclists caught a glimpse of it far away to the north of where they stood with others watching for it.

There are miles and miles of beaches in Southern California and we biked through most of them. We biked past the San Onofre nuclear generating plant which is presently shut down. We biked through Camp Pendleton and did not see a single tank despite the warnings that they had the right of way.

We rode past tens of miles of beaches seeing volleyball nets and players, surfers. No wonder Southern California is an ocean and beach playground for recreation enthusiasts.

We enjoyed our happy hours and group dinners. The ride was scenic, full of history and opportunities to make new friends. At two of our map and happy hour meetings we enjoyed singing and guitar playing by a professional musician who was riding the tour.

Participants: Patricia Elson, Kristi Brubaker, Roy Brubaker, Brenda Cole, John McManus, Larry Roe, Joan Roe, Diane Sanchez Costello, Miriam Joscelyn, Marlene Rawles, Henry Livingston, Debbie Livingston, Mark Berenson, Charlotte Patterson, Colette Farabaugh, Janice Harms, Ginger Edwards, Christopher Marsh, Janis Marsh

Get Your Kicks on Route 66 - Part 1 September 21st to October 16th

Ride Director: Richard Gallo, Report by: Bill Kiess

Part 1 - "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" started in Chicago, Illinois on September 21st and ended in Amarillo, Texas on October 15th. This great ride provided a fantastic look back into the past as we rode through large cities and small towns on sections of the Old U.S. Route 66 plus we rode a number of bike paths adjacent to our route that were installed over / near to the Old U.S. Route 66.

The riders all met in downtown Chicago (a block off of Michigan Avenue) where we had a two night stay. Ride leader, Rick Gallo and co-director Judy DeSantis greeted us at the Social Hour of the first night. Rick explained rules of the ride in general terms and Judy gave each of us an outstanding package of Route 66 information, documentation and que sheets.

We had 19 people (7 female and 12 males) from 12 different states with ages ranging from 55 to 81. We had one couple riding a tandem with all the other riders on road bikes with tire sizes ranging from 700 x 23 to 700 x 32.

The ride totaled 1,185 miles and gained 31,505 feet during our 23 riding days. We had 10 riding days with the elevation gain under 1,500 feet, 5 riding days with the elevations gain 1,500 to 2,000 feet and 6 days with elevation gain 2,000 to 2,700 feet.

We had some moisture on a couple of days, but we avoided heavy downpours while we were riding. We had strong headwinds on a couple of days and also we had several days with a good tailwind. Of course, the days with the strong headwinds are etched in our minds far more than the days with the good tailwinds!

We left Chicago on a traffic free Sunday to ride on our way south/westward on historic Route 66 to the towns and cities enroute to Amarillo. As the song partially states "onto Saint Louie then Oklahoma City, you got to see Amarillo" - we bicycled past countless Historic US 66 Byway route signs. Each group of riders had an opportunity to check out numerous places and many sites of interest on the route that were of interest to them.

Just some of the hundreds of Route 66 sites visited or viewed: the Chicago Water Tower, Biograph Theatre, the Gemini Giant in Wilmington, IL; the O'Dell, IL Standard gas station; the Funk Grove, IL sirup store; the Gemini Giant in Atlanta, IL; the arch, the old court house and Ted Drewes Frozen Custard Stand in St. Louis; the Circle Malt Shop in Bourbon, MO; Devil's Elbow while enroute to St. Roberts, MO; the Munger Moss Motel in Lebanon, MO; the Phillips 66 gas station in Baxter Springs, MO; Will Rogers Museum in Claremore, OK; the Blue Whale in Catoosa, OK; POPS gas stations and soda fountain and the round barn in Arcadia, OK; the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building Memorial Park in Oklahoma City, OK; Sid's Diner in El Rino, OK; the U Drop Inn in Shamrock, TX; the Britten Truck Stop Leaning Water Tower in Groom, TX; Cadillac Ranch and the Big Texan Steakhouse and Motel in Amarillo, TX. Many of the places we visited or viewed along the way were photographed by Judy DeSantis and there is information and photos from each day that can be viewed on her blog --www.loneriderpedals.blogspot.com

Part 1 of the Route 66 ride was a well organized ride with great social hours - the beverages, the cheeses, the fresh vegetables, dips, shrimp, chocolates, etc. along with the special treats of the great pies from Hammett House in Claremore and the ice cream we had in Shamrock after a hard day of riding into the wind. Our thanks to Rick and Judy for the time and effort they put into making this ride a success.

We will be looking forward to Part 2 of a Route 66 ride. We will be watching the BAC site for information on the Santa Monica to Amarillo section. And, we highly recommend that this Part 1 Route 66 ride be given again and again!

Participants: B Charles Graham, Judith De Santis, Vicki Labella, James Kervick, Richard Gallo, Tricia Lee, Ann Nordstrom, Hewes Agnew, Susan Agnew, Gerald Hefele, Dennis brua, Craig Deidrick, Bill Kiess, Martha Wright, Steve Bennett, Becky Hettinger, Michael Blake, Maureen Nelting, George Olmstead

Bike and Hike the Mountains of North Georgia September 29th to October 7th

Ride Director: Dennis Moberg, Report by: Hank Hermes

On Sept. 27, 2012, twenty six riders assembled in the "Chicken Capital of the World", Gainesville, GA, to get acquainted and enjoy the first of the gourmet happy hours provided by our leaders Dennis & Marita Moberg. Our first riding day was overcast (not the heavy rain predicted) and a pleasant 40 miles with a stop at a pumpkin farm where drivers were given wheel barrels to take the huge pumpkins they'd selected back to their cars. Also available was homemade pumpkin pie and boiled peanuts. Dropping our bikes off in a park provided shed, we hiked 1.5 miles (and 600 stairs) to the top of Amicalola Falls and a beautiful overnight Lodge. Some rode the steep 1.5 miles to the lodge before coasting down and hiking. For day 2, our hiking day, the weather forecasters did get it right; torrential rain! But our leaders were prepared and distributed inexpensive, plastic ponchos to cover us and our back packs. The day began with a park ranger speaking on "Birds of Prey," and showing us several owls and a black vulture, birds which had been rescued and healed. Fascinating 1 1/2 hrs.! Then we sloshed our way up the five mile trail to the Len Foote Hike Inn, only accessible by foot. The downpour stopped about midnight and our Tuesday hike of 6 1/2 miles back to the bikes was dry and pretty, as was our short ride to Dahlona, GA. The evening "Happy Hour" (feast) featured Jarlsburg cheese, smoked salmon, crackers and French wines. (Wish you'd been along?) Wednesday, our longest riding day (47.2 mi.), began with fog which soon gave way to bright sunshine, temperatures in the 70s, smooth roads, with two of the famous "Georgia 6 gaps" (in Colorado we'd call them mountain passes) on our route. Have to tell you! For this day's Happy Hour" Marita had made rotisserie chicken with almond curry on endive/red pepper while Dennis featured wines from Chile. Thursday, again beautiful weather, had the possibilities of a short (22 mile) ride to Helen, or this with an optional side trip to Brasstown Bald, Georgia's highest mountain, involving a three mile climb (with a section of 19% grade) and a 0.6 mi. hike to the summit tower. (One could also hike the 3 miles instead of riding them.) The summit views were spectacular! Several of us decided the 3 mi. climb was only a warm up so we'd continue to Helen via "Hogpen Gap" and the Richard Russell scenic hwy. Being from Colorado, I thought I knew what to expect for mountain passes. But Hogpen Gap-WOW! This featured a 4 1/2 mile stretch of 12%-14% climb (with no relief). The scenery was superb; great views and trees turning to shades of red. Helen is a replica of a German/Bavarian town. Octoberfest was in progress; our Happy Hour featured cheeses, grapes and German wines. Following Happy Hour, our group member Steve Mangold treated us to blue grass favorites on his fiddle. Helen was our "layover" day with several optional activities and rides. Saturday, the final day, was a 40 mile ride back to Gainesville, Happy Hour with Feta cheese, antipasta, salami, olives, crackers and Italian wines, and a wonderful group dinner.

This was the first BAC trip Dennis and Marita have led; they were "GREAT". Preparation was perfect, unexpected problems were handled calmly and smoothly, they were delightful to be with, and "Happy Hours" the BEST. BAC is lucky to have them as members!

Participants: Dennis Moberg, Marita Moberg, Ruth Maule, Judy Shubin, Charles Carlson, Richard Spinetto, Janet Freeman, Hank Hermes, Carol Hermes, Michael Troy, ary Counihan, Michael Counihan, Bob Martel, Vickie Smith, Frank Lamitola, Cheryl Minvielle, Albert Minvielle, Dawn Callahan, Kristen Carlson, Nancy Hornor, John Hornor, Bob Mueller, Ellen Mueller, Jacque Austin, Stephen Mangold.

Participants: Ruth Maule, Judy Shubin, Dennis Moberg, Marita Moberg, Charles Carlson, Richard Spinetto, Janet Freeman, Hank Hermes, Carol Hermes, Michael Troy, Mary Counihan, Michael Counihan, Bob Martel, Vickie Smith, Frank Lamitola, Cheryl Minvielle, Albert Minvielle, Lisa Sessa, Dawn Callahan, Kristen Carlson, Nancy Hornor, John Hornor, Bob Mueller, Ellen Mueller, Jacque Austin, Stephen Mangold

Amherst in Autumn October 7th to October 13th

Ride Director: Andy Schwartz, Report by: Andrea Diamond

For cyclists wishing to enjoy spectacular fall foliage and a taste of quintessential New England, this is the trip for you. The stage is set from the moment you step into the Amherst Inn or Allen House, the two Victorian B&B's where the cyclists were housed on this fixed-base ride. The accommodations were charming, comfortable, and well maintained. Each morning began with a delicious and hearty selection of hot and cold breakfast fare to fortify us for our daily rides. Our thoughtful tour leaders, Andy and Debbie Schwartz, provided snack foods to take along on our rides every day, though there were ample snack and/or lunch stops built into the rides that Andy had planned. Group dinners were arranged the first and final nights of the trip. In between, dinners were on our own, with many excellent restaurants in the area from which to choose. Of course, the happy hour snacks and drinks provided by Andy and Debbie for our daily ride meetings sometimes made dinner unnecessary.

Andy planned an assortment of rides of varying lengths and terrain to suit a wide range of riding abilities. Some cue sheets included optional add-ons to enable the cyclists to tweak their rides to perfection. The terrain varied from flat, to rolling, to more challenging hills. The rides were mostly on lightly traveled roads, though there were a few busy spots getting out of town and an occasional short leg on a main road. Some lovely, tree-lined bike trails also comprised part of the route on several of the rides. We cycled through farmland, small towns, and along sun-dappled country lanes with babbling brooks running alongside them.

Typical of New England at this time of year, the weather was variable, so be prepared to dress accordingly. We experienced cool and cloudy weather the first few days, followed by rain mid-week, and then clearing (but chilly) by the end of the week. While the scenery was beautiful even on cloudy days, it was absolutely breathtaking when the sun came out and treated us to a vibrant palette of autumn colors.

Highlights included an impromptu detour on the Notch ride for a spin through Mt. Holyoke College led by illustrious alum, Ida Nystrom. Sampling cider donuts at various farm stands, climbing the tower for spectacular views at the Quabbin Reservoir, and hiking up to the stunning Peace Pagoda on the Cave Hill ride were memorable experiences. We also enjoyed ribbing Andy about his promises of treats (hot apple crisp at the Smiarowski farm stand, frappes & grinders at Chubby Checkers) that failed to materialize. When the electricity went out for a few hours one evening at the Amherst Inn, several cyclists remained in the dark parlor, telling ghost stories by candlelight. Some thought the inn was haunted. Seriously, who WAS that mystery lady living in the attic?

Amherst offers many non-cycling attractions, perfect for rainy days or just a day off from riding. There are numerous museums, college campuses and a world of history, art & culture to explore. For those without cars, the shuttle buses connecting campuses provide convenient transportation for everyone. For bicycling needs, Laughing Dog Bicycles (just a few blocks from the inn) provided quick, friendly and reasonably priced service to several of our members needing repairs or supplies.

This was my first experience on a BAC ride, and I have to say, it was a wonderful introduction to the club-beautiful scenery, great group of people, well run, and a lot of fun. I'm hooked!

Participants: Chuck Freitas, Andy Schwartz, Patricia Daniels, Mary Jo Freitas, Roger Paluska, Ellen Cohen, Debbie Schwartz, Patrick Beckham, Ron Cohen, Stephen Diamond, Andrea Diamond, Bill Deverell, Marne Deverell, Richard Moothart, Barbara Moothart, Ann MacCrimmon, Julie Clark, Jim Joyner, Ida Nystrom, Jim Nystrom, David Patria, Barbara Underwood, Elizabeth Buckingham, John Stephenson, Diane Pearson, Erika Weaver, Sue Paluska, Margene Beckham

Tour of Cathar Country, Eastern Pyrenees September 1st to September 16th

Ride Director: Jane Holahan, Report by: Brian Aldrich

Cathar Country Trip Report -- Sept. 1-16, 2012

Leaders: Jane Holahan & Gilbert Jean. Report by: Brian Aldrich and Janet Noble

How could one resist the experience and energy of a leadership team comprised of Jane Holahan and Gilbert Jean? Jane's ride description conjured up visions of towering castles perched on sheer precipices, medieval chateaus, idyllic tree-lined roads along the Canal Midi, exquisite French cooking and superb French wines - and we were not disappointed!

Our first day's ride began along Toulouse's wonderful canal path, which provides a scenic and traffic-free route out of the city. Next came gently rolling hills, and we began to see the Pyrenees looming on the southern horizon. The next day's longest route included a ride through the Mas-d'Azil, a huge cave with a road and river through it, followed by a beautiful rolling route just below a row of limestone cliffs. We stayed the next two nights in Foix, a stage finish for this year's Tour de France. For our rest day, many of us chose a loop ride to Niaux for an exciting guided tour of prehistoric cave drawings. The sensational and mysterious paintings in the "Salon Noir" required a kilometer's walk by flashlight deep into the cave. Our fourth day of riding held the option of climbing the Col de Montsegur, which was an exhilarating challenge. The descent was tightly switchbacked and tremendously exciting to ride.

The following day we enjoyed a sunny, rolling day through the countryside, our warmest day yet, arriving at the awesome 16th century Chateau des Ducs de Joyeuse, where we enjoyed the pool and the courtyard and an exceptionally elegant dinner under the stars.

Next we were thrilled by the Gorges de Galamus and the awesome climb to the ruined fortress of Peyrepertuse. The view of the ruins was amazing; it bogged the mind to contemplate the challenge of building such a castle at the top of such a narrow, tall mountain. On ride seven we rolled into gorgeous Collioure on the Mediterranean Sea. Collioure is exceptionally picturesque, reminding one of the lovely towns of the Cinque Terre in Italy. The water was fabulous and inviting for swimming.

Rolling up the coast, the route was over 100 km and exceptionally varied as we negotiated bike trails and canal trails, leaving us exhausted and happy to be in Gruissan! Riding from Gruissan to Siran, we visited the medieval town of Minerve, built in a steep limestone canyon. The weather was warm to hot, and we were all thrilled to arrive at the elegant Chateau du Siran. Our dinner, served outdoors on the patio, was absolutely exquisite.

The next day was our shortest ride and the only day of riding in some rain. The views of the magnificent castle of Carcassonne were enchanting on the horizon as we neared the end of our ride. For the rest day, our leaders had arranged for a guided tour of the medieval city, and that evening we were treated to a charming concert at our hotel by Odile's choral group. Our next-to-last day of riding featured gentle but constant climbing into the Black Mountains, seeing more forests and long vistas out towards Toulouse. At our lovely hotel we enjoyed relaxing by the pool and enjoying the view out over the large lake which serves as a reservoir for the Canal du Midi.

Our last day's ride concluded via the peaceful canal path into Toulouse. A lovely goodbye dinner that evening, sad farewells, and many thanks to Jane and Gilbert for arranging such an elegant, fascinating and very fun adventure for us all!

Participants: Jane Holahan, Ann Barten, Janet Noble, Gilbert Jean, Robert Yee, Ellen Cohen, Ron Cohen, Leslie Train, Harold Ashby, Pat Highet, Jacque Smith, Edie Baxter, Betty Hoffman, Vickie Smith, Frank Lamitola, Dorothy Stock, Judy Ashby, Brian Aldrich, Rebecca Swan, Dawn Callahan, Doug Jacober, Pat Simmermacher

West of England - Tour of Wessex and the Cotswold September 2nd to September 15th

Ride Coordinator: Alma Worthington, Report by: Angela Bidlack

This trip was packed with more events than can be chronicled here. Below are just a few of the many wonderful sights we saw. The weather was fabulous--no rain to speak of and the temperatures were perfect. Some highlights include:

We started in Wells and rode to Glastonbury, a town inhabited from Neolithic times. The Abbey, once a Benedictine monastery, sported the supposed grave of Arthur & Guinevere. Lovely grounds and amazing old ruins. This stop also included a well-done museum which really gave a sense of the long time period that this Abbey was inhabited.

Some of the group continued up to Cheddar Gorge, the home of delicious local cheddar cheese. Although quite a climb, the riders who did it reported spectacular views and a hair-raising descent.

9/4. After a bit of a climb, we enjoyed a splendid downhill and arrived at Stourhead. It was created by an 18th century banking family. It consists of 2,600+ acres with one of the finest gardens in all of England that boasts a lovely lake and walk featuring classical temples, grottos and rare and exotic trees.

9/5. We started out on a lovely, sunny day and cycled out of Longbridge Deverill on a pleasant country road past Shearwater Lake. We did a fair amount of climbing to reach our first destination--Longleat. We toured the magnificent home of the Earl (Marques) of Bath.

On the road back, we passed through many little villages and road many streets with charming names: Tytherington, Teapot Street, Hanging Lanford to name a few. Once in Salisbury we set out immediately for the famous Salisbury Cathedral which boasts the best-preserved copy of the Magna Carta.

9/6 We set off for a nice cycle to Stonehenge. Stonehenge's main claim is that it is the largest man-made stone arrangement in England. The largest stone would weigh 45 tons-- about the size of 7 elephants.

We were treated to a view of three of eight the White Horses of Wiltshire. These horses, some ancient and some relatively modern we're formed by cutting away the topsoil on a hillside to expose the white limestone or chalk underneath.

9/7. We set off on one of many options for the day's route, heading for Avebury. Along the route, yet another Wiltshire Horse, the Alton Barnes, appeared.

We then got on the grounds of Avebury, also a UNESCO World heritage sight. It consists of three large stone rings around the town. It also contains the largest stone circle in Europe.

9/14. Today, is our last day of cycling. We did a lovely 26-mile loop which gave plenty of time for touring Cirencester which had a lot of Roman history.

Some sights not chronicled included: Trip to Stratford to see a Shakespearean play, fantastic sights when we stayed in Bath and Bourton-on-the-Water plus extensions in London--all just wonderful!

Participants: Nancy White, Jon Marcil, Susan Strange, Judy Disman, Alma Worthington, Jim Nystrom, Sally Mc Kinney, Judith Neyer, Elaine Spagnolli, David Spagnolli, Ida Nystrom, David Forester, Earl Benner, Angela Bidlack, Jeanette Glesmann, Ted Glesmann, Kenneth Cameron-Bell, Scot Cameron-Bell, Judy Willard, Linda Doering, Rich Disman, Dave White, Tina Neil, Nikki Silvis

Tuscany on the Mediterranean 2012 September 12th to September 22nd

Ride Director: Syd Smoot, Report by: Marisa Fink

Fifty cyclists gather at Marina di Castagneto Carducci in Tuscany, Italy. The following is an account of our experience told in a series of six-word stories recounted by the BAC riders during our stay:

Hotel I Ginepri welcomes us to Italy. Wonderful roads, little traffic, excellent bicycling. Verdant hills abound, hilltop towns astound. Climb to towns for best views. Olive groves, vineyards, orchards, tasting rooms. Sheep bells chiming in delightful harmony. Beautiful climbs, steep descents, eyes watering. Climbing, climbing, climbing, climbing, coffee, descend. Climbing, climbing, climbing, pizza, gelato, descend. Spa and massage on easy day. Riding with family and friends - Buonissimo. Bolgheri for cappuccino, Carducci for lunch. Escape to Elba for scooter riding. Old cities, new wonders, making memories. Mediterranean swims reward challenging ride days. Once strangers, now friends, bicycling exceptional.

Participants: Martin Fink, Jack Tiano, Leo Munneke, Cathy Munneke, David Sexton, Michael A Ungaro, Francine B Ungaro, Syd Smoot, Thomas Glendinning, Celia Heneghan, Bruce Spencer, James A Matzger, Bill King, Carmen Gray, Carole Smith, Jackie Clow, Lucille Rhodes, Ken Keeler, Michael Kirk, Nancy Kirk, David Hansen, Nancy Hansen, Marisa Fink, Ron Sonkin, Gene Rainey, Bj Harvey, John Harvey, David Goley, Tom Froehlich, Susan Froehlich, Mark Clarkson, Marjorie Clarkson, Marty Spence, Cheryl Brown-Kovacic, Nancy Kerr, Mark Hauswald, Sheldon Orkin, Sally Mather, Jan Gleason, Lianna Jones, Judy Tiano, Gordon Dinsdale, Rebecca Crandall, Joe Tiano, Bonnie Barstow, Lenore Thomas, Neal Thomas, Lisa Yuschak

Loire Gardens and Vineyards September 18th to September 27th

Ride Coordinator: Jane Holahan, Report by: Leslie Train

We were most fortunate to have Jane Holahan as our leader during our 8-day bicycle tour around France's Loire Valley. She shared with us much knowledge of the region and her local friends who were involved with the fabulous gardens and chateaux we visited. We met near Tours and set off the following morning to Villandry, a Renaissance chateau and its elegant gardens. An American heiress and her Spanish husband rescued it from demolition in 1906. We rode on to lunch by the chateau at Langeais before heading to Azay-le-Rideau for the night.

Day 2 we biked to Chateau La Chatonniere for a guided tour by the nephew of the owner, Beatrice d'Andia. Originally a stronghold on the old Roman road the chateau gradually morphed through the centuries from defensive to an elegant residence. After the tour we had a delightful lunch with wine put on by the gardener's wife out under the chestnut trees. We then rolled on by Chateau d'Usse on our way to Chinon for the next 3 nights.

Day 3 we rode out to Chateau du Rivau for a tour of the gardens and chateau. Here again modern and formal styles prevailed in the gardens. There was the obligatory maze, a gorgeous kitchen garden under screening to keep out the wandering peacocks, modern sculptures, more creative minds at work. We lunched from individual picnic baskets and enjoyed local wines. In Chinon that evening we tasted wines in a cave under the fortress where Joan of Arc had gone to ask for support for her battle against the English at Orleans.

Day 4 some of us rode out into the countryside past the birthplace of Rabelais and on to the Abbey de Fontevraud. That evening we walked up to Elsie's Rose Garden owned and maintained by Elsie de Raedt, author and premier expert on old roses. She served us a delicious dinner and imparted much knowledge on roses. She said some of the old chateaux in the area have bushes that are 400/500 years old.

Day 5 we left Chinon for Montbazou. Along the way we visited a museum dedicated to Honore Balzac where he spent time writing his novels. For the night some of us stayed at the old mill house, Moulin d'Artigny of the nearby elegant hotel the Relais d'Artigny. We had a picnic supper by the mill house and retired for the night. Thunder, lightening and heavy rains took over for the rest of the night. Fortunately they stopped by morning.

Day 6 we cycled past impeccable vineyards to Chenonceau made famous by the women in King Henri II's life, Diane de Poitiers, his mistress, and Catherine de Medici, his wife. Afterward we rode on to Amboise where we spent the last 3 nights of the tour. The next day we cycled to the Valmer Chateau gardens and tasted the local white wines. Then it was back to town where several toured the chateau at Amboise and the home of Leonardo da Vinci.

Day 8 some took the train and the rest cycled to Chaumont. Catherine de Medici had lived there until her husband, Henri II, died. Then she moved his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, to Chaumont and she took up residence at Chenonceau. The annual Festival of Gardens was in process at Chaumont. Several teams from all over the world have 6 months or so to establish creative gardens. Some are fantasy, some are quite remarkable and others try the imagination. We concluded our bicycle tour with a group dinner and said our farewells.

Participants: Carol Svendsen, Lois Bolton, Jane Holahan, Leslie Train, Gilbert Dominguez, Maria Dominguez, Robert Yee, Jay Mead, Paul Barrett, Kathleen Corrigan, Rich Bellagamba, Jim Wilson, Marolyn Davenport, Mary Blakinger, Chuck Blakinger, Charlie Kalb, Kristina Kalb, Joyce Halstead, Gwen Toso, Robert Toso

Hautes Pyrenees September 21st to October 7th

Ride Director: Stephen Kiel, Report by: Anthony Moy

The neophyte and the "old hand:"-Stephen Kiel and Gilbert Jean-designed and led a meticulously well-organized and delightful trip through the French Pyrenees, starting from Toulouse and ending at Lourdes. Despite whatever first-time jitters he suffered Stephen did a remarkable and thorough job, no doubt helped greatly by the experienced Gilbert, who also drove the van. The trip had an excellent structure by having us start along the flat Canal du Midi and then progressing to the rolling foothills of the southern Pyrenees before we finally tackled the high passes, allowing everyone to get their climbing legs and lungs inured to the effort required. In addition, well-placed "rest" days at Bagnères-de-Luchon and Cauterets allowed us to recover and enjoy the local sights. The cols we tackled included a "Who's Who" of famous climbs, including the Portillon, Peyresourde, Aspin, Soulor, and of course, the Aubisque and the Tourmalet; some folks also tackled the ascents to the Cirque de Troumousee, Superbagnères, and the Hautacam. We were blessed by uncommonly good fall weather-not too hot and usually not too cold-and we had to withstand just two days of rain.

High/lowlights of the trip include:

- Two tours-one walking and one cycling-of the city of Toulouse, the latter led by Gilbert;
- An unbelievable, leg- and soul-sapping, all-day 20 mph headwind on the Canal du Midi;
- A delicious pique-nique put together by Gilbert and his chérie Odile;
- The medieval towns of Foix and St. Bertrand-de-Comminges;
- Beautiful, scenic hikes in Cauterets and Gavarnie;
- Surmounting the Tourmalet;
- Climbing out of the mist into the sun on the Aubisque;
- Pyrenean tartiflette!
- The as-always difficulty of getting a variety of vegetarian meals in France other than a salad or omelet;
- The Fete du Rosaire in Lourdes.

After Lourdes the group returned to Toulouse via a tour bus, which Stephen and Gilbert had arranged.

Stephen's avuncular leadership style was low-key yet effective, and Gilbert, as ever, exercised infinite patience with our ignorance and generously shared his profound knowledge of local history and riding.

Of special note was the comprehensive website of the trip that Stephen built. In what may be the way of the future, all the exquisitely detailed cue sheets and maps were available for download at one's convenience rather than having to be sent out. His site also included logistical, historical, and sightseeing information, and participant bios. And, for those of navigating with GPS devices he also provided GPS files!

We all ended the trip safe and sound with no accidents and just a few minor aches and pains no doubt due to the effort of climbing so many cols!

-Tony Moy

Participants: Roger Hoyer, Ed Hass, Sandra Eve, Alan Deda, Anthony Moy, Stephen Kiel, Karen Hass, Gilbert Jean, Nancy Lieurance, Linda Kiel, Richard Carter, Frank Palmer, James Shaughnessy, Mary Ellen Shaughnessy, Susan Rexer, Gerald Rexer, Monique Mustard, Bob Mustard, Cia Reis, Alex Reis, Barry Spaulding, Claudia Spaulding, Jean Peters, Jane Maxwell, Walter Diewald, Catherine Nelson