

Penticton Offers Great Fall Cycling And More....

For those familiar with the annual EMCC spring Penticton camp, the October weather is comparable with “fresh” morning start temps of under 5C and slowly rising mercury to around 14C.

Having arrived a couple of days before of Ed, I gave a section of the Kettle Valley Rail trail a go. Only 15 minutes into my first ride, on a gentle climb, my handlebar snapped in half like a potato chip! Fortunately no “loss of face” or other related injuries – I can only imagine the damage that could have been unleashed on my body had I been descending the rugged and steep Chute Lake logging road! (By the way, the Penticton Bike Barn recommends changing handlebars every couple of years due to the inability to see metal fatigue until it’s too late.)

With newly installed handlebars I went for a few hours on the KVR trail heading from Penticton to the Naramata Bench and north to Chute Lake. A steady 2 % grade kept me at an honest work effort, especially with the soft sand and gravel in parts. The trails have good signage and seem to be consistent in quality. Not much wildlife to be spotted on this day, but signage warns of rattlesnakes between April and October. In retrospect, I probably would’ve enjoyed using my mountain bike more than cyclocross on the KVR.

The next ride saw us ride from Penticton to Reservoir Road to Greyback Mountain. It’s amazing how this climb now seems so comfortable compared to the beginning of the season – no really, I’m being serious! Quickly the pavement ends and a much more rugged climbing experience begins. The next 1.5 hours is pure climbing grunt work punctuated by bouts of pushing the bike over rocky/steeper sections. My only thought at the time: “this seems like too much fun for a middle-aged guy to be having!” Don’t worry, I’ll be seeking professional help for this apparent psychosis.

Mercifully upon reaching the top we connect with the #201 logging road and the next couple of hours of riding at 5,000 feet offered many great vistas and good terrain. Fortunately for me, Ed had roughed out a map for our journey and correctly identified our final turn that would take us to Carmi Road and our descent into Penticton. All in all, this was a challenging and enjoyable 5+hour experience.

The next morning we joined the Penticton Java Junkies, a very welcoming crew, for an “easy” three-hour ride. The route was north to Summerland and the Scout Camp. No shortage of climbing on this ride, but things really got outlandish when a strong Calgary rider (Geoff) did a few long pulls at about 40kph into a tough headwind. Our group of 12 was severely fragmented but we did regroup at the Scout Camp – a most civilized arrangement, especially for the only two riders (Ed and Brian) on cyclocross bikes and knobby tires. The return trip was not without its “need for speed”, as a Wisconsin Ironman winner (Andre from the Ukraine) and fast guy Geoff hammered together off the front with Brian and Ed in “near-futile” pursuit. After much effort we closed in on them. However, in truth, the only reason we caught up to these speedsters is because they

waited for us and some of the other wayward soles!! The best part of this ride was the strong tail wind that pushed us home.

The final ride of the trip would see us head up the familiar Green Mountain Road. Unlike the spring rides, we rode up towards Apex Ski Lodge. The road surface is very good and the gradient is steep enough to ensure low rpm's. Unfortunately, we didn't quite make it to the top as we had other commitments to attend to with our significant others that day. For perspective, from the bottom Apex turnoff we climbed for 35 minutes and descended the same distance in five or six minutes!

Unlike the spring bike camp where we are all highly motivated to cycle lots everyday, during the 2009 version of the Brian and Ed fall camp we were content to intersperse our riding days with hiking, wine tastings, and touring with our significant others. The next time I go to Penticton with my cyclocross bike, I'll plan to bring two sets of wheels, as Ed wisely did, so I can equally enjoy the road and off-road challenges. Whether spring or fall, Penticton has much to offer, including limited road traffic, and I look forward to the next adventure.

Submitted by Brian Countryman