

THE GOLD RUSH TOUR

Four days, 260 miles

150 years ago, gold was discovered in the western foothills of the Sierra. Within a few frenzied years, miners had scoured every square inch of those foothills in pursuit of their precious metal. In the wake of their fevered exploration—and exploitation—they left a wonderfully tangled web of tiny roads connecting tiny towns. No other region in California presents the cyclist—and tour planner—with such a complex and confusing network of interesting little back roads.

From a cyclist's point of view, it's an embarrassment of riches. As a tour planner, confronted with so many choices, I felt like a kid in a candy shop: what to include; what to leave out. Fortunately, I had the advice and assistance of many experienced riders from the local bike clubs in Sacramento and Stockton.

Their extensive local knowledge helped me sort through a bewildering number of options in preparing these routes. The result is a package of bike-friendly loops that ranks as one of the best tours we offer.

We feature two tours in this region: the Gold Country Tour, a six to eight-day campground-based tour, moving from north to south down the length of the western Sierra foothills; and the Gold Rush Mini-tour, a four-day exploration of the heart of the region. Centered in the little town of Volcano, it meanders through the remote mountains and foothills via loops that always return to the same location.

Your routes will visit many points of historical interest in this region famous for the Gold Rush and the rough-and-tumble boom towns that sprang up and prospered at the height of gold fever...and then went into suspended animation after the fever had passed. In between the pioneer towns are miles of dinky little roads through the hills that have riders climbing or descending most of the time...sometimes over steep, wooded ridges, sometimes out across open, rolling grasslands, and sometimes down into canyons where some of California's last, best wild rivers still run free.

In four stages, this hilly little tour accumulates over 24,000' of elevation gain in around 260 miles. Any time you average close to 100' per mile, you've put in a good day's work, and to do it four days in a row is a tall order. You will have to be comfortable—in your attitude as well as your fitness—with lots of climbing and descend-



ing. If you're not, this isn't the tour for you. On the other hand, if you are up for the challenge, you'll experience some of the best riding in the state... maybe in the world. This is superb cycling, as long as you can handle it, and the descents—usually on excellent pavement—offer a great return on that hefty climbing investment.

Finally, a word about the weather: it can be extremely hot here in mid-summer...well over 100°. Coupled with the challenging terrain, this could make for a brutal experience. We suggest visiting in the late spring or mid-fall.



There are 14 guest rooms on two floors in the main (old) building and six more in the detached (new) annex, plus a garden cottage with a suite of rooms. In the old hotel, bathrooms are at the end of the hall (all newly renovated and very nice). In the annex, the rooms have their own bathrooms. It's a trade-off: the rooms in the historic hotel have loads of charm and cost a little less, while the rooms in the modern annex have a little less charm but do have private baths. It probably comes down to what's important to you. My wife and I chose a lovely room on the corner of the top (third) floor of the old hotel, with french doors opening out onto the long balcony fronting the building. Being able to sit just outside our room on the balcony—in the balmy evening air, lounging in adirondack chairs,

Staying in Volcano

When we first laid out this little tour based in the Gold Country village of Volcano, the St. George Hotel was the only place to stay in town. Now it looks as if the hotel has a rival, just around the corner. That would be the Volcano Union Inn, which I believe opened for business in 2005.

Typically, when we present one of these hub-based tours, we don't offer specific recommendations for one inn or another. We simply list the available options and let you decide. That however had not been the case with this tour. Because the St. George Hotel had been the only game in town, and because we liked it so much, we didn't have a problem with promoting it. The introduction of the new inn is not going to change that, but in the interest of providing you with all the options, we feel we should at least mention the new kid on the block. We'll provide the web addresses for both inns, and you can do your browsing and make your choice. But the fact remains that we know the St. George—having stayed there ourselves—and we like it. No, we love it.

The grand old St. George Hotel (above), built in 1862 and rebuilt several times since, is on the National Register of Historic Places, and it's as picturesque inside as out. On the ground floor are the lovely dining room, an elegant main lounge, a quaint old saloon—reeking of quirky Gold Rush ambience—and a wide deck overlooking lawns and gardens. Decor throughout is a charmingly eclectic mix...sort of Victorian parlor crossed with frontier homestead, with dollops of flea market and English men's club thrown in. You don't have to take our word for this though, or settle for the few photos reproduced here. You can go to the hotel's website and peek into every room on your own. They're all pictured and each is unique. The site also displays the menus for both their highly acclaimed restaurant and for the fare that can be purchased at the bar. More about the food later.

overlooking the treetops of Sutter Creek canyon—made our cozy room feel as if it had grown into the most luxurious of suites. In addition, there is a lounge/library just outside the rooms on the third floor that is very quiet, as it is seldom visited by folks from the lower floors. This too expanded our sense of elbow room. And we never had to wait for one of the very pleasant communal bathrooms.





Although there is no swimming pool, there is something that may be even better: a great string of swimming holes in the narrow, granite-walled canyon of Sutter Creek, just a few hundred yards below the hotel. On a hot summer afternoon, after a hot ride, splashing around in these cool, clear pools is as close to heaven as you're likely to get in this mortal coil.

The Volcano Union Inn (left) is just around the corner in the next block. It's much smaller than the St George, having only four rooms. But it looks rather similar, like a scaled down version of the same building, including the balcony across the front (below). All four of their rooms have private baths and they appear to have some sort of restaurant as well, although the website isn't too specific about what sort of cuisine they offer. Rates seem to be comparable to

the rooms with private baths at the St George.

Volcano currently has a population of around 100, but during the Gold Rush, there were over 5000 miners here, tearing up the creek and the surrounding hillsides, looking for their treasure. By 1860, the local gold was all played out, and within a few years, the town was in decline. Aside from the hotel(s), there are only a few commercial estab-

Last time we checked, the price for a typical room was running around \$90, with some of the larger rooms well into triple digits. This is a considerable jump in prices from when we first laid out this tour. At that time—not that many years ago—the best rooms were only \$70 and a single person could rent a nice room for \$40. Those days are gone, alas, but it still remains a delightful place to stay, even if you'll have to dig a little deeper for the privilege. And for what it's worth, this is a bed-&-breakfast style hotel, with a sumptuous breakfast included in the price. (At least that's how it worked when we stayed here.) To be fair, this is not a sit-down, dining room breakfast, with many courses of eggs and bacon and whatnot. It's technically only a continental breakfast, but is a far cry from the sad little affairs they offer under that name in most mainstream motels. There are warm, fresh-baked scones and muffins and enough fruit to feed an army, as well as coffee, juice, etc. Even for a hungry cyclist, it seemed like more than enough food for riding, and all of the best quality. You can eat it in the dining room if you wish, or have it delivered to the quiet lounge on the third floor, to the balcony, or out onto the back deck above the gardens.

There is a superb restaurant with entrées in the \$19-\$33 range. (This too represents a price hike from when we stayed here...up from a range of around \$13-\$18....ah well.) They serve Sunday brunch, but no breakfast, aside from the continental offering described above. Most lovers of good food could happily dine here three or four nights in a row. Dine *al fresco* on the garden deck one night and then in the grand, formal dining room the next night if you crave variety. Same menu, inside or out. If you don't feel up to a fancy dinner, you can order a number of less ambitious meals from the bar menu at much reduced prices (compared to the restaurant entrées), and most add up to a full dinner...things like burgers, chicken quesedillas, and salads, all under \$8. You don't have to eat them in the bar either. You can take them—or have them delivered—to your room or to that wonderful balcony.





About the routes

Normally, on our point-to-point tours, we move through a region in a more-or-less straight line, overnighing in a new place and moving on each day. However, when we laid out our north-to-south Gold Country Tour, we ended up including two optional loop days in this area. The region is simply too rich in scenic back roads to blow through on the fly. Those two loops form the basis for our Northeast and Southeast Loops. The Northwest and Southwest Loops are formed in part out of the incoming and outward bound legs of the main route from that tour, coupled with more of the great local roads to double the routes back to Volcano. Because it lingers in one place, this Mini-tour does a better job of exploring the region than the longer tour...a densely packed bundle of the best backroads of Amador, El

lishments in town: a store, a cafe, and a few shops.

There is one rather unusual attraction: just across from the hotel and up the road a few yards is an old, outdoor, stone amphitheater (above) which is used in the summer by a community theater company for staging plays. Apparently the troupe has a good reputation and folks come from quite a distance to enjoy the productions. Patrons arrive in the early evening and picnic on the lawn before taking in the performance. While we were there, a Noel Coward play was running, and we sat up on our balcony, putting away quesadillas and beer, while looking down into the amphitheater from on high. If you're interested, hotel management can probably advise you of the theater schedule for each summer season.

The best known tourist attraction near Volcano is Daffodil Hill, just a few miles up Rams Horn Grade. This is a small area that has been planted and replanted with daffodil bulbs until the whole area has become a butter-colored extravaganza in the spring. Unfortunately, this impressive display will probably not coincide with your cycle-tour. It occurs a little too early in the spring for ideal, reliable cycling weather. Besides, it creates a great tourist draw, and the otherwise nearly deserted back roads are swarming with motorized gawkers...not a great time to be on a bike.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no public transit to Volcano. The nearest such systems will only reach the towns of Jackson and Sutter Creek, several miles down the mountainside. There are many motels and inns in both of these larger towns, as well as numerous restaurants and cafes that run the gamut from fast food to gourmet. There are also a few restaurants in Pine Grove, uphill to the south on Hwy 88.

Dorado, and Calaveras Counties.

As noted earlier, this is hill country. The number of really flat miles on these four loops could probably be counted on one hand, with some fingers left over. Volcano sits deep in the wooded canyon of Sutter Creek, and of the five roads that lead out of town, four go up, usually quite steeply. All four of the rides begin with substantial climbs, but three of them—all but the shortest, easiest stage—end with descents, which certainly makes them a little easier to handle.

As far as the level of difficulty goes, yes, this is a hard and challenging set of routes, but many of these roads are featured in either the Sacramento Wheelmen's Sierra Century or the Sacramento Bike Hikers' Pardee Party Century, and thousands of riders of very moderate ambitions and fitness have completed those rides. It may take them all day to get it done, but they do it...smiling. And our daily miles are considerably less than a century.

In addition to our disclaimer about all the climbing, we





Rams Horn (left) gains around 950' in 2.5 miles, and then there are more miles of gradual uphill after that. It may seem like a cruel way to start the day, but you'll forget all about it as soon as you turn onto Fiddletown Road. This is a wonderful descent. You drop 1600' in a little over ten miles, and all of it is perfect for a bike: steep enough to pile on a good turn of speed, but not steep enough to require much braking; always flowing back and forth through endless S-bends...all well-banked and well-paved. This is one of the high points of the Sacramento Wheelmen's annual Sierra Century...a downhill run the participants gleefully rehash afterward. Cycling at the highest, purest level: transcendent joy achieved through kinetic poetry.

should just add one small reservation about redundancy. Four stages centered in Volcano means eight trips in and out of town, and with only five roads at our disposal, it means some of them are going to be used more than once. This is a small matter which might not bother anyone but a finicky route planner. We do like to provide fresh new roads every day, so we apologize—mildly—for asking you to ride a few miles of roads twice. It may be that you will want to slightly modify the routes by driving your car to the top of the next nearest hill to eliminate a climb or to avoid doing the same road twice.

Our desire to duplicate as few miles as possible—and to make every climb as easy and every descent as fun as can be—has led us to create some routes that appear in some cases a little convoluted and contrived. All we can say is that they may look weird on paper, but they ride great. We have arranged the four stages in a sequence that makes the best sense to us, with the harder ones first, while you're fresher, and with the duplicated roads showing up only every other day.

Northeast Loop

60 miles, 6500'

65 miles, 7000'

This is a clockwise loop up into the hills to the north and east of Volcano. (I guess the name would tell you that... duh!) It presents riders with some challenging climbs, and then rewards them with some really amazing descents. In fact, the ride ends with several miles of nearly continuous downhill...always a plus in my book.

The main street of town runs past the St George Hotel and turns hard right at the end of the block. This is called Main Street in front of the hotel and then Consolation Road after it turns the corner, but soon becomes Rams Horn Grade as it leaves town and starts climbing.

All this fun and frolic drop you into the village of Fiddletown at mile 17 (below). This sleepy little hamlet looks much as it did over 100 years ago: a few stores and houses in the classic, Old West style, including a kooky general store where you can get just about anything, as long as it's odd. (If you start your ride shortly after breakfast, the store will probably still be closed when you get here.)

The route turns right in Fiddletown on Tyler Road, and for the next nine miles you wander through the wooded hills on a succession of narrow, up-and-down lanes serving a





thinly settled backcountry. Among them is Bridgeport School Road (above), a really sweet little road. You'll gain a little over 1000' along the way, most of it in the initial climb out of Fiddletown and the rest in little, lumpy rollers. It's a perfect venue for cycling...peaceful and pretty, and virtually devoid of cars. When I laid this route out in my car, I sort of overlooked this section...thought of it as merely little connector roads to tie together other, more interesting parts of the stage. After I rode it on my bike though, I changed my thinking: some of my best memories of this stage are from this section.

At around mile 26, you hit Shenandoah Road and the town of Mt Aukum. If Mt Aukum has a picturesque old town, I must have missed it. In fact, I don't recall much of a town at all, except for a few conventional roadside services. You turn right on Shenandoah and then right again on Omo Ranch Road in just a few tenths...unless you're opting for the longer route, in which case, you bear left on Mt Aukum Road.

The posted mileage and elevation numbers for the day don't really do justice to

the difference between the two routes: five miles and a few hundred feet. Hidden behind the numbers is the way in which those few extra miles and feet are acquired...in a word: steeply. But before examining those tough climbs, let's follow the shorter route to the point where the two routes rejoin. It's a fairly easy tale to tell: Omo Ranch Road, all the way. For nine miles, you climb into the Sierra foothills, gaining 1500' along the way. The first mile is nearly flat, and then you have to go to work. Most of the rest of this section is uphill, sometimes quite steeply, but never to the level of being a death march...just good honest labor. Usually you're riding through dense forest, although I can't promise the road will be all in shade. It's a little too open for that. The wide spot in the road that the maps label as Omo Ranch has very little there beyond a few buildings and a school where you might find water.

After turning left on Mt Aukum (at mile 26.3), the long route drops briefly into a pretty valley (below) and then climbs to a junction with Fairplay Road (just before mile 31). There is a small store at the intersection. You go right on Fairplay and almost immediately turn left onto Perry Creek Road. Shenandoah and Mt Aukum were wider, somewhat busier highways, but Perry Creek is another of those shrimpy little lanes through the middle of nowhere. It drops three or four hundred feet to the creek and then begins climbing. A little over three miles into the uphill, you turn left on Slug Gulch (photo, next page, top). This road is a legend among the local riders, with a funky reputation to go with its funky name. In the first three miles you gain 1000' in a series of intimidating, switchbacking walls. The climb is so tough that when the Sierra Century goes up it, club members are waiting at the top to present each gasping and wheezing rider with a special medal that says, "I tamed Slug Gulch!"

After the steep section, the Slug shows some mercy, with only a couple of hundred more feet of gain in the final two miles to the junction with Omo Ranch, where the routes rejoin. Don't congratulate yourself too soon though on





having beaten this hill: that is far from the end of the work. Omo Ranch continues to climb into the hills to the tune of another 1500' spread over nearly ten miles of more-or-less steady grade. Now you're really up in the mountains, and the scenery along this stretch has an almost alpine quality to it, with a tidy understory of fragrant—some might say pungent—bears clover beneath a soaring canopy of firs, pines, and cedars (middle photo). Most of the time you're closed in among the trees, but occasionally you catch a vista out over the distant ranks of forested ridges.

Finally—near mile 45 (short route miles)—you come to the end of all the climbing, and I can almost say that it's all downhill from here. There is one small up in the middle of all the down, but other than that, the final miles are all downhill excitement, beginning with a high-speed scream down Hwy 88. This is a major highway—dropping out of the high Sierra from Carson Pass—with the potential for a lot of traffic to and from the South Lake Tahoe region. But there is a wide shoulder, and if you want to, you can bomb through these three miles almost as fast as the cars can. It's wide open and beautifully paved. In spite of its reputation for traffic, when we toured here, we lucked out and did this very fast, smooth descent absolutely car-free...the whole wide road, all to ourselves. A section I had been dreading turned into one of the highlights of the day.



In the midst of that high-speed flier, you'll need to be keeping a close watch for your right turn onto Shake Ridge Road. It comes up rather suddenly, and at one time was not too well marked. (That may have changed.) Shake Ridge has chunky old pavement for the first mile or so, but then improves to good quality similar to Fiddletown Road. In fact, the rest of this descent is much akin to those dream miles (bottom photo). After the brief uphill at mile 49, you'll be zipping downhill constantly all the way back to Volcano. Rams Horn Grade is a big part of this big descent. It was beautifully repaved in the summer of 1998 and is now like a black satin ribbon. Unlike Shake Ridge and Fiddletown, Rams Horn is a little too steep and twisty to let it all hang out. But bold descenders will turn this into one of the highlights of the tour. It's a curvy, swervy dervish of a downhill, and with the newish asphalt, it will be about as good as it can be...a rush.



And that makes a fabulous way to finish the day... flying into Volcano at the end of almost 15 miles of almost constant carving, slashing downhill. All that's left is an easy roll-out around the corner to the hotel. Grab a long, hot shower—or treat yourself to a plunge in Sutter Creek—and then put your feet up on the verandah and rehash the day's highlights, of which there will be many.



Southeast Loop

61 miles, 7500'

In spite of being a few miles shorter than the long option on the Northeast Loop, most local riders will tell you this is by far the harder loop, mostly because of several very steep climbs. And because it doesn't offer an easier (shorter/flatter) alternate route, there is no avoiding them. While only the Slug Gulch climb could be called really wicked on the Northeast Loop, on this stage, there are many walls that will have even strong riders working at their limits.

Today, you head in the opposite direction on Volcano's main street: south onto Pine Grove Road. After a brief drop into a saddle where the road crosses Sutter Creek, you begin climbing steeply...very steeply. Pine Grove gains about 500' in the first mile and then a bit more as it rolls over the summit. While this is a brutal pitch, I'm guessing most folks will find it within their reach because it comes early in the day, while legs are still frisky. (When we toured here, we did it at the end of a hot, 75-mile ride, and it was pretty butch.)

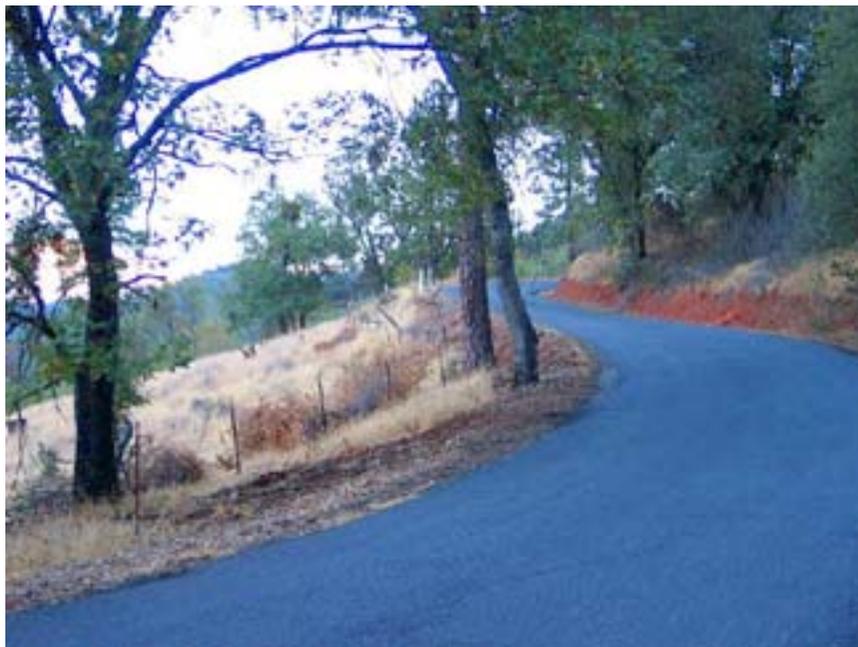
Just over the summit on Pine Grove, you ride past Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park. Unlike all the other historic sites in this region that have to do with the Gold Rush, this one is dedicated to the Miwok Indians who lived here before the invasion of the argonauts. A large limestone slab in the middle of the meadow was used by many generations of Miwoks as a mortar for grinding acorn meal, and an interesting interpretative center has been built nearby to honor and remember the area's original residents. The first driveway you pass leads to the visitor center and the second one leads to a campground. If you don't want to stay

at the St. George Hotel or in some other inn, this is the closest camping alternative. However, when we did our campground-based Gold Country Tour, we rode past here and stayed at another camp that you'll pass in a few miles. Indian Grinding Rock is pleasant, but there isn't much to do here except sit in your camp...no creeks to explore, no lakes to swim in, etc. Pine Acres Resort, on Tabeau Road, has good camping facilities and also has a swimming pool and game room. Both camps have decent showers. Pine Acres also offers a modest motel.

Beyond Indian Grinding Rock, Pine Grove Road rolls through a saddle, over a small hump, and then zips down the far side of the hill on a nifty little free fall. It eventually ends up teeing into Hwy 88, but before that, our route tacks east on a little byway called Aqueduct Road that will bring you a little closer to your connection to Tabeau Road. You have to look sharp for Aqueduct, as you'll be descending when it pops up on the left. It's a quiet, pleasant, nearly level road through the forest (above) that tees into 88, where you turn right (west) on the main road. A half-mile climb on the shoulder of the highway brings you to a left turn onto Tabeau Road, just at the summit.

Now you get to leave the highway behind and set off on a very nice cycling road. Tabeau (pronounced "taboo" locally and spelled several different ways on maps and street signs) climbs gently for about half a mile—passing Pine Acres Resort—and then launches off into a wonderful descent (below). Tabeau and Clinton Road, just below it, combine for 11 miles of fast, twisty downhill on generally excellent pavement. There is one small climb in the middle of Tabeau and several almost level spots and little saddles, but the





You zig zag through town on neighborhood streets before turning left on Hwy 26...still going uphill. The top of the climb comes just after mile 23, and within a fraction of a mile, you turn right on Jesus Maria Road. Don't miss the turn: this little road doesn't look much bigger than a driveway at the beginning. A short uphill hump and then you're off...snaking downhill (again!) on a mile-and-a-half plunge to Jesus Maria Creek. This road is unlike the earlier roads today. Jesus Maria is a tiny path with only moderately decent pavement, which makes the downhill a lot more technical. Once down to the creek, you roll along beside its pretty pools and riffles for a mile before beginning a long climb back into the mountains (left). Between mile 26 and mile 32, you'll climb from an elevation of 1100' to 2600'. This is serious work, and even though there are several small flats or saddles along the way to afford you the occasional rest, the overall

overall theme through this stretch is descending. This is at least as much fun as the descents on Fiddletown, Shake Ridge, and Rams Horn...about as good as it gets.

After a couple of nearly flat miles at the bottom of Clinton, you hit the town of Jackson. You'll see more of Jackson on the Southwest Loop—riding right up the main street—but today you just skirt the southern border of the town before turning left on Hwy 49. Within a mile of town, you're bombing downhill again, this time snaking down 49 to the bottom of the canyon of the Mokelumne River. By the time you cross the river, you will have descended for around 13 of the first 19 miles of the stage, plus another two or three miles of fast roll-out, with a total elevation loss of nearly 2000'. Better than two cups of coffee in the morning for waking you up!

Now however, you have to begin making some hefty balloon payments on that big loan you just took out from the gravity bank. From the river, you climb steadily for most of four miles on Hwy 49. Watch for the signs for a left turn onto the Historic Hwy 49 bypass. This gets you off the busy highway, cuts the top off the hill, and takes you through the pretty pioneer town of Mokelumne Hill. Founded in around 1850, "Mok Hill" followed the same meteoric career path of many another Gold Rush boom town: an overnight birth and furious, uncontrolled growth (complete with epidemic violence and frontier justice), a brief heyday of sudden wealth, and, after the local gold was played out, a long slumber as a near-ghost town. Now, its few remaining blocks of Western/Victorian storefronts and homes have a sleepy, quiet charm, and the town survives as an historical artifact and tourist attraction.

impact is severe. (And don't forget the four miles and 800' of climb leading up to Mok Hill, plus the steep Pine Grove wall out of Volcano...it starts adding up.)

Over the top of the main climb on Jesus Maria, you bump up and down for several miles along the ridge line, losing and gaining altitude in rugged 100, 200, and 300' chunks, eventually topping out at 2800'. In many ways, these smaller but steeper hills are as exhausting as the bigger, more daunting ascents. At mile 35, the old, patchy pavement gives way to smoother asphalt, and at around mile 37, you turn left on Railroad Flat Road (below and next page, top). (After laying out tours all over the state, I've come to the conclusion that almost anytime a place name contains the word "Flat," it means the road will be anything but flat. The name usually refers to some little settlement that was built on the only reasonably level spot in the region...remarkable simply by virtue of being different from all the surrounding hills. Such is the case here.)

Up here in the mountains, the Mokelumne and Calaveras





Rivers have spread out into a network of tributaries—like the fingers of a great riparian hand—with each creek dancing about in its own steeply walled canyon. As you head north on Railroad Flat and its successors, Hwy 26 and Red Corral Road (between miles 37 and 58), you will cross six rivers or large streams, and you will drop down into the canyon—and climb back up the other side—of each one. Like stinging jabs from a boxer, the little uphill hits keep coming...100' here, 400' there...until you start to get a little punchy. At least on the smoother pavement, you can wring a little momentum out of the corresponding downhill bits.

There is a market in the little mountain town of Railroad Flat at mile 42.6, which will be your first crack at store-bought munchies since Mok Hill at mile 22. There will be another couple of small stores in the next ten miles, but that's about it for civilization. There are so many hills in this section, it's hard to pick out any single one as being especially noteworthy, but there is one, just a few miles beyond the town of West Point that sticks in my mind as really nasty. You drop steeply to the north fork of the Mokelumne and cross the river above magnificent pools set amid soaring granite monoliths. I recommend stopping here to enjoy the scenery or even jump into the beautiful pools if you and the weather are hot enough. It will also delay the big climb ahead: almost 1000' in 3.5 miles. After all the jabs and body blows of the past 25 miles, this is the haymaker that finally buckles your knees.

Once over the top of this fierce climb, you can recuperate for most of the remainder of the ride. Just a mile beyond the summit, you tee into Hwy 88, almost across the street from Pioneer-Volcano Road. Jog across the highway and enjoy a nifty descent, slinking all the way back down the forested ridge to the Pine Grove Road junction. And then it's just a fraction of a mile back into Volcano and a well-earned rest...after this ride, maybe even a nap!

I've been so busy talking about the tough climbs on this ride that I've neglected to say much about the scenery. Briefly, it's a typical Sierra landscape: beautiful mountain streams, massive granite walls and boulders, forests of both broadleaf and needle trees in great variety, and every

so often a sweeping, sub-alpine meadow to open up the vistas. Aside from a few small towns and scattered rural homesteads—and of course the roads—there are very few marks of man here. It's a wild, rugged region.

In spite of my dire characterization of this loop, I hope you will feel up to the challenge of tackling it. It will reward all your hard work with eye-popping landscapes and thrilling descents, and aside from the short stretches on Highways 88 and 49, it's a car-free cycling paradise.

Northwest Loop

48 miles, 4000'

Bonus: up to 16 miles, modest elevation gain

This is probably the easiest stage of the tour: fewest miles as well as least elevation gain. Think of it as a rest day after yesterday's arduous trek. And it can be made even easier with a suggested modification. I also offer some ideas for extending the ride.

This loop visits the charming pioneer town of Sutter Creek. We like it so much, we visit it twice. Actually, the route is roughly in the shape of a figure-8, with the town at the crossover point.

Remember on the Northeast Loop how we turned hard right from Main to Consolation at the start in Volcano? Today we're going to go more-or-less straight ahead at that corner. Straight ahead and straight up. This is Charleston Road, and it offers another way to climb into the mountains north of town. Both Rams Horn Grade and Charleston climb steeply up to the top of the ridge. You're going to have your work cut out for you, whichever way you go. But Charleston is the more extreme choice. The first pitch gains 400' in about half a mile. That's a 15% grade, but a few spots are even steeper. In all, it gains about 1000' in a little over three miles. Did I say this stage was easy? Well, it is, except for this little challenge right at the start.

We're doing this bad boy for three reasons. First, we've already done Rams Horn twice—once up and once down—so now we're doing something different. Second, it's a neat road. Hard, yes, but also beautiful. Once past the fierce





initial pitch, it eases off and even goes downhill here and there, and it opens up some really pretty vistas. Finally, it heads more directly toward where we want to go. However, if all of that doesn't convince you, and if the prospect of that 15%+ wall gives you the heebie jeebies, then you can do Rams Horn again, or perhaps even the easiest alternative: starting off with the downhill along Sutter Creek.

That's the only one of the five Volcano roads that goes downhill out of town. For various reasons, I use that road on the return leg of the trip...uphill from the town of Sutter Creek to Volcano. If you wanted to avoid the climbs on either Rams Horn or Charleston, you could begin the day with the downhill on Sutter Creek and simply retrace that part of the route at the end of the ride. The pavement's a little patchy and bumpy—which is part of the reason I choose to use it only as a climb—but otherwise it would be fine. Take a look at the elevation profile: turn around the long, gradual climb at the end of the profile and substitute it—as a downhill—for the spike representing Charleston at the start. You can see that it now becomes a very easy stage.

On the other hand, you would miss the whole point of why we want to go up Charleston (or Rams Horn): to do the terrific descent of Shake Ridge Road. You did the upper half of this sweet road on the Northeast Loop, and now you have a chance at more of the same good stuff on the lower half, only in this case, it may be even better, because a lot of the lower section was recently and beautifully repaved (left), so that it rides like a dream (unlike bumpy Sutter Creek). Either way, you'll have a

great ride on a loop that's reasonably mellow, at least in comparison to the first two days, even with Charleston or Rams Horn Grade on the dance card.

This section of Shake Ridge descends for most of 11 miles, with a few small saddles and uphill thrown in to keep you sane. At a junction with Pine Gulch Road, Shake Ridge bears right, climbs a bit, and then descends for another two miles smack into the center of the town of Sutter Creek. Somewhere on the approach to town, the road name changes from Shake Ridge to Gopher Flat, but you won't notice this name change unless you happen to glance at the street sign when you tee into the main street in town.

Sutter Creek (below) is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting and attractive of the Mother Lode boom towns. Over \$40 million in gold was pulled out of the

mines here, and when the gold ran out, the town continued to prosper with a lively lumber industry. Also, it has always served as a central supply depot for all services and materials for this region. Through good luck or good planning, the town has preserved the best of its charming downtown core, where second and third floor balconies on the ornate, Victorian storefronts overhang not only the sidewalks, but the narrow main street as well, giving the town an especially quaint, old-world look. Today the town thrives primarily as a tourist attraction, with most of the storefronts housing gift shops and many of the fine old homes operating as bed-&-breakfast inns.

This quaint, narrow main drag through town is actually the very busy Hwy 49. Or was... Sometime in 2007, CalTrans will complete a new highway bypass around the western perimeter of town. Now the main street will carry much less through traffic, which has to be good news for everyone except perhaps a few car-oriented services. When I first heard about this bypass, I was afraid it would badly scar the landscape west of town. But it doesn't look all that bad. You





stands of firs and pines give way to rolling grasslands dotted with majestic old oaks.

Sutter-Ione tees into Hwy 124, a fairly busy local road. You head north on it—very slightly uphill—for one mile to a left turn onto Willow Creek Road (below), where you leave most of whatever traffic there is out here and return to quiet backroad biking. Willow Creek rolls along its gently up-and-down way for most of five miles, dipping down into a couple of creek beds and humping up over the hills in between, before teeing into Hwy 16.

This is another rather busy highway—but with big shoulders—a straight, flat, fast link directly to Sacramento. You follow it for a mile and half of the closest thing you’ll find on this tour to a flat road. Not very exciting, but soon over. Hwy 16 ends when it runs into Hwy 49. You turn south on 49 and zoom downhill for a little less

can’t build a highway without making at least a little mess, but overall, they appear to have done a good job.

On your first pass through town, you cross over the main street directly from Shake Ridge/Gopher Flat to tiny Hayden Alley, which delivers you, in one, brief block, to Spanish Street. This pleasant street runs parallel to the main street and is lined with many elegant old homes, most in a state of spotless and pristine restoration. This is your route out of town. Spanish climbs a short hill, and then you turn left on Sutter-Ione Road and climb a longer hill up and out of town, past scattered residential tracts of more recent vintage than the old town at the foot of the hill.

Sutter-Ione Road (above) is a fine cycling road. The pavement is a bit rough as you climb out of town, but once out in the rolling hills west of town, it becomes as good as a road can be. It crosses the new 49 bypass near the crest of the climb out of town, runs along the ridge for a while, and then, between miles 19 and 24, drops nearly 1000’ in a series of sweet little downhills. There are some uphill bits in there that are too big to dismiss as “just rollers,” but overall, the theme of this section is flying on two wheels.

Having crossed Hwy 49 for the first time on this tour, you enter a slightly different landscape. To the east of the main Gold Country artery, the hills are steeper, rockier, and more heavily wooded. Out here, on the west side of the highway, rolling out toward the great Central Valley of California, the land smooths out a bit. The hills have a softer, more rounded and pillowy look, and the dense

than a mile before escaping from the busy highway by turning left into the tiny hamlet of Drytown.

A brief digression here: if you feel you’re not getting your money’s worth with this loop being only 48 miles, I do have a couple of add-ons to suggest. They’re very nice, and my only reservation about them is that they require riding on a busy, commercially cluttered stretch of Hwy 49 south of the town of Plymouth. Anyway, here’s what you would do to add the bonus miles...

Instead of turning right from Willow Creek onto Hwy 16, turn left. After one mile heading west on 16, turn right and head north on Latrobe Road (more open, rolling grass-





lands... above), and then right again in two miles on Old Sacramento Road. This tranquil byway wanders gently uphill along the bank of Little Indian Creek and in five miles enters the town of Plymouth. At this point, you could just head south on 49 back to the Hwy 16 junction and carry on down 49 to Drytown. This would yield a net gain of around eight miles.

Or, for even more miles and smiles, you could cross 49 from Old Sacramento to Shenandoah Road. Bear left on Shenandoah Road at the Fiddletown Road junction and then turn right and head uphill on Shenandoah School Road. This is a beautiful, quiet backroad, ideal for cycling. If you do this section, you'll see something you won't have seen much of anywhere else on this tour: vineyards (below). This is the heart of Amador County's grape growing and wine making region, which has earned itself a respected reputation for full-bodied zins and other big reds. There are a number of wineries along this loop...worth a visit.

Shenandoah School Road tees back into Shenandoah, where you turn left and descend on an easy, non-technical grade back to Plymouth, pick up Hwy 49, and head for Drytown. This loop will probably add another eight miles. Doing both loops will produce a ride of over 64 miles, but it's still the easiest of the four tour stages. I would wholeheartedly recommend both of these optional sections were it not for the two miles of crud on 49, south of Plymouth. For what it's worth, local cyclists tell me they ride this stretch all the time and claim it doesn't bother them, if you want to consider that an endorsement.

Back to the basic route... Drytown is very small indeed and has few significant services for passing travelers. But it marks the gateway to a clutch of remote roads perfect for cycling. These roads don't appear on a typical AAA map, and I

missed them the first time through the region. But my local cycling pals told me I had to come back and explore them, and am I glad I did! You will be too, once you discover them for yourself. But these hidden treasures come at a price: you have to claw your way out of Drytown on a series of steep, stairstepping pitches that gain 200 and 300 feet at a time, eventually adding most of another 1000' of gain to your day's total, over a stretch of about five miles.

In between the climbs are lovely little valleys...meadows mixed with picture-postcard forest glades and handsome old barns. It's all very off-the-beaten-path and serene. Most of the time, the roads are little more than one lane wide, and yet most of the time, they sport decent pavement. (This is a common theme in the Gold Country: although we do visit some rather badly paved roads on some of our routes, the vast majority of the roads in this area are superbly paved, even many itty bitty ones—like these—that seem to wander from the middle of nowhere to the back of beyond.)

The only problem with riding this string of little roads is that the turnings are sometimes a bit confusing. While the county public works people have kept the roads in good repair, they haven't exactly emptied their coffers to pay for street signs. The most confusing turn is the first one after leaving Drytown. You have been climbing on New Chicago-Quartz Mountain Road, and after descending steeply from the final summit at about mile 32, you come to a junction with a road heading off to the right (south). This is the direction you want to go. This is Turner Road, although there is not a single sign at the intersection to tell you so. The only way to know it's the right intersection is that Turner splits and forms a little triangle of roads at the junction, as we have illustrated on the map.





you're on the right track. Church Street becomes Sutter Creek Road as it leaves town, and the road climbs steadily but usually very gently for the next 12 miles. You'll climb about 800' in those 12 miles, and it will mostly be pleasant work, under the shade of the surrounding broadleaf forest, and almost always alongside the cascades and pools of beautiful Sutter Creek (below).

You may think that ending the ride with a 12-mile climb is some kind of sick joke on my part, but trust me: you're going to enjoy this road. Any loop ride that has as many nice downhills as this one does is eventually going to have a few uphills as well. But when it comes to taking your climbing medicine, this is about as pleasant and sugar-coated as your medicine could be.

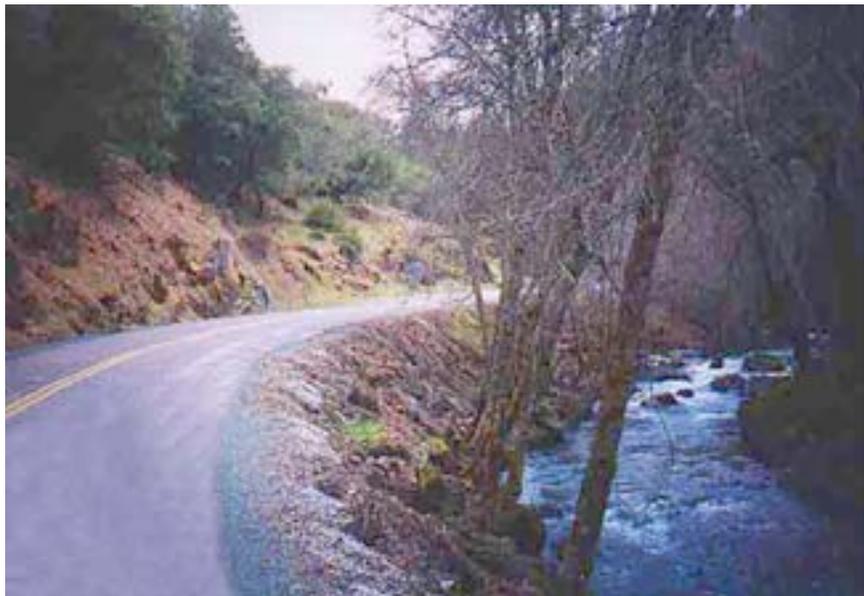
After several twists and turns and ups and downs, Turner merges into Stringbean Alley (above). (They have a great knack for colorful place names in the Gold Country...have you noticed?) Stringbean Alley climbs one last hill and drops steeply back to the town of Sutter Creek, where, in the interest of keeping you thoroughly confused, the road name changes to Amador City Road and then, as you recross the main drag, to North Amelia Street (all without any turnings, of course). Amelia quickly tees into Spanish Street, where you're entitled to feel a bit of *deja vu* all over again. It's the same Spanish Street you were on 20 miles ago, only this time you're going in the opposite direction. Pass Hayden Alley and follow Spanish all the way to its end, where it squeezes between the tall Victorian storefronts and spills right out into the center of the historic old town.

If you didn't stop to prowl Sutter Creek on your first pass through town, I urge you to do so now...to get off the bike and browse around in the many shops and galleries, or just park your keester on a sidewalk bench and watch the world go by for a few minutes. If your timing is good, you might arrive here near midday, and you can stop for lunch. There are several eateries in town, but my favorite is the Chatterbox Cafe, somewhere down the block from Spanish Street on the west side of Main Street. Great food, whacky decor, and a waitress with attitude to spare.

You're only on the main street for one block before turning left on Church Street and heading up into the hills. This is not a well-marked turn—we're getting used to that by now—but a sign to Volcano and Daffodil Hill is your cue that

If it's a hot day, you may decide to break the climb off at some point to scramble down to the creek and dunk all or part of your well-toasted body into one of the many deep pools along the way. This one little picture I have of the creek—taken on a gray day in November, as I recall—does a poor job of conveying just how pretty and pleasant this creek is, and how enjoyable it is to ride alongside it.

At the top of the hill, with some of the best of the granite-walled swimming holes just to your right, you turn left on Pine Grove Road and cruise up around the corner into Volcano... home again.





off the busy, cluttered main drag. It also cuts the top off one hill, although it adds another—on the tail end of Pine Grove—so that’s about a wash. This is not the big, nasty climb on Pine Grove, but it’s not exactly easy either...short but steep.

(If you were going to substitute Tabeau and

Southwest Loop

61 miles, 6000'

If for some reason you have decided to skip the more challenging Southeast Loop, you should at least do the first big descent on Tabeau and Clinton Roads from that loop, as that represents one of the best downhill entertainments on this or any other tour. I’m mentioning that now because you can substitute that opening section for the section this stage uses to get to Jackson (Climax and New York Ranch Roads). While today’s route is good—better than just good—it is still a poor second to Tabeau/Clinton. I don’t have any photos of either Climax Road or New York Ranch Road, so I’m throwing in one more shot of Tabeau Road (below), just to remind you of what a slick piece of work it is. Swapping out the assigned route for the alternate will totally foul up your route slip, but it’s still worth it. But really, we hope you will do all four stages so none of this will be necessary.

This ride heads south out of Volcano on Pine Grove. When last we headed this way, on the Southeast Loop, we sent you up the monster wall on Pine Grove. Today, we’re offering a slightly easier climb up to Hwy 88: Volcano-Pioneer Road, which forks left where Pine Grove forks right, just outside of Volcano. If you did the Southeast Loop, you will have descended this road at the end of the ride, in which case you will now know what to expect. It’s a substantial climb, but falls just shy of being killer for most riders. I hope so anyway. It’s definitely easier than Pine Grove. Once up to 88, you have to ride along the shoulder of the busy highway for 2.5 miles. It’s not great cycling, with quite a bit of traffic and more commercial clutter along the road than is ideal for a back road cycle-tour. But at least there are decent shoulders and at least it’s slightly downhill and so whizzes by quickly.

Just to escape the highway, we have you peel off onto Aqueduct Road and head back to Pine Grove Road. You’ll recall Aqueduct from the Southeast Loop: a pleasant, level run through the forest. It’s one road I don’t mind doing twice, especially when it gets us

Clinton for Climax and New York Ranch, you would have stayed on 88 at the Aqueduct junction, carrying on up a modest climb to a left onto Tabeau.)

Back to the official route... Once you put this mini-wall on Pine Grove behind you and arrive back at 88, you’re in the middle of the sprawling commercial stew that passes for the town of Pine Grove. If there was ever a scenic, pioneer heart to this village, it was long ago subsumed in a ribbon of tacky development strung out along the highway for most of two miles. However, as with the earlier section of 88, this part also has wide shoulders and tilts downhill for you. In fact, you start rolling down the mountain at a pretty good clip before your next turn comes up on Climax Road. Once on Climax, the downhill fun continues. From Pine Grove at mile 7 to the town of Jackson at mile 17, you will descend most of the time. There is one flat mile on Ridge Road and a couple of little uphill bumps on New York Ranch Road, but otherwise, it’s a whole lot of gravity candy.

After miles of pretty country riding on New York Ranch Road, you are dumped rather abruptly right into downtown, old town Jackson (above). Turn right on Court, left on Water, and head down the hill into the city center.

Jackson was a town even before the discovery of gold, as





seasons of late spring to mid-fall, you will see more in the way of blue skies, green trees, and golden grasses.)

This is all somewhat similar to the beginning of the Jesus Maria stage: by the time you bottom out at mile 26, you will have descended for around 17 or 18 of those first miles, losing almost 1800' along the way. Of course, tossing away all that elevation in such a prodigal manner at the start of the ride is why the end of the ride seems so hard...but hey, we'll worry about that later! For now, enjoy the downhill.

In the last couple of miles of this great downhill, you start catching glimpses of

travelers stopped here because of its location at a source of good water. But it boomed in the Gold Rush too, and in fact gold was still being mined here as late as the 1940's. Now, perhaps because the town lies at an important junction of Highways 49 and 88, it has outgrown its boomtown-to-ghost town heritage and has surrounded itself with some less than attractive suburbs and commercial strips. Today's route manages to avoid most of the worst of this modern sprawl by heading right through the center of the old, pioneer downtown. The couple of blocks along Main are home to an impressive collection of stately old structures, most from the latter half of the 19th century. Most of the town's original buildings burnt down in the early 1860's, and the more fire-resistant brick and stone buildings now on display were built at that time. Most impressive of all is the grand old National Hotel at the foot of the street. Ride up the well-preserved main street, cross Hwy 49, and head out the other side of town.

Pardee Reservoir, which impounds the waters of the Mokelumne River, and at mile 26, you fetch up on the shore of the lake. As you ride around the reservoir, you cycle along the tops of three different dams, the first of which comes just at the bottom of the long downhill. This is the Jackson Creek spillway. Just a mile later, you come to a fork in the road and turn left on Pardee Dam Road. There aren't any road signs to tell you the names of either of these forks, but it's the only left turn you can make in the area. The only sign in the intersection at all is one pointing the other direction on the right hand fork that says Pardee District Recreation Area. If you need water, look for the headquarters of the campgrounds along the lake, which will show up as a driveway on the left somewhere along here. It's your only shot at water for most of the rest of the stage, at least until you're back in Jackson.

When you cross 49, grab your climbing gears, because the road out of town—Hoffman Street—starts with a couple of steep blocks that would do San Francisco proud. As you leave the houses of town behind, the grade eases off, and by mile 18, you've topped the rise and are ready for another great downhill run. Somewhere—probably at the town line—the road name changes from Hoffman Street to Stony Creek Road. From the top of the grassy knoll at around mile 18, you can look forward to almost eight miles of cycling that is as sweet as it can possibly be... undulating, slinky miles through the rolling hills, almost always pleasantly downhill, and occasionally quite rapidly down (above).

Once on Pardee Dam Road, you ride down the length of the lake, twice cycling along the tops of dams: first, the main Pardee Dam—blocking the deep gorge of the Mokelumne

(By the way, several of the photos in this write-up, including the one above, were taken on a tour in mid-winter...hence the gray skies, green fields, and bare trees. It's a testimony to the fact that you can ride here almost year 'round, but if you tour here in the more likely





Up from the river, the road name changes to Middle Bar Road (right), as it climbs for three miles to a junction with Hwy 49. Pavement on Middle Bar is generally in crappy shape. But it's mostly an uphill, and at climbing speed you can dodge the holes and cracks without much fuss or bother. My most recent ride up this hill reminded me somewhat forcefully that it isn't all easy climbing. Most of it is relatively mellow, but there are a couple of pitches that approach double digits. This is all very pretty country for cycle-touring. Both

River—and then the spillway dam a little further along. The run across the main dam is one lane, and a signal regulates traffic...everyone taking turns (below). There is enough room for bikes to meet oncoming traffic and get by, in case you don't get through the controlled section in your allotted time window. In any event though, there is almost no traffic out here, so it's unlikely to be much of an issue. I mention this because you might want to stop halfway across the dam and peer over the downstream side into the deep gorge of the river. It's quite an impressive canyon and definitely worth a look.

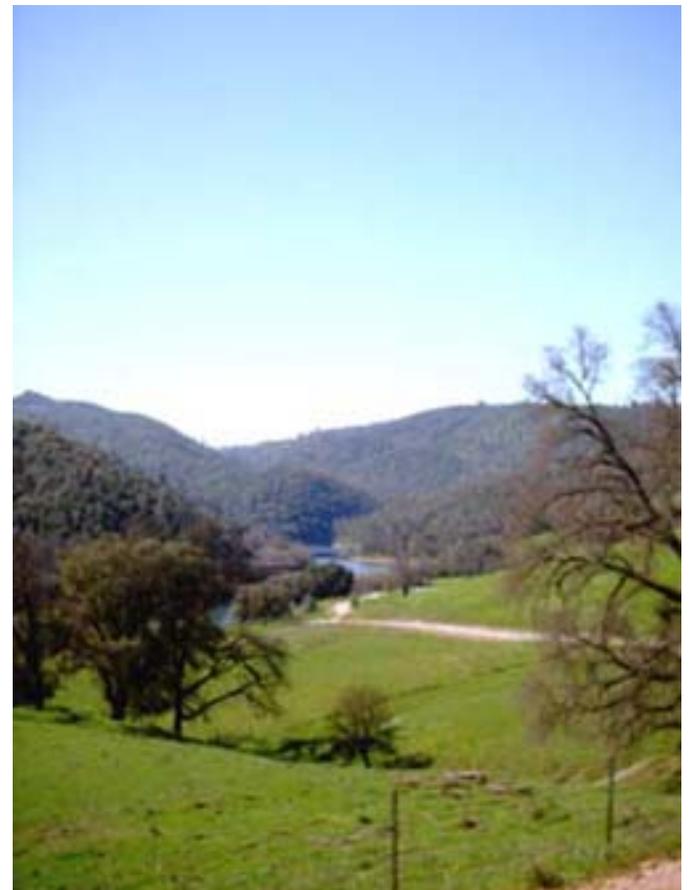
When Pardee Dam Road ends, there are once again no road signs at the intersection, except one rather puzzling one that says you've just been riding on Sandretto Road! Where did that come from? I guess the roads change names somewhere out there, without ever going through a junction. Anyway, at the otherwise unmarked end of this road, you want to turn left on Campo Seco Road, and then, in a little less than a mile, left on Paloma Road. This is all moderately rolling terrain through meadows dotted with stately old oaks.

That will change with the turn onto Paloma, where, after starting out with a level section (above), you will have to tackle a substantial climb over the course of the next few miles...700' in a little over four miles. Up on the ridge, with lovely views over the surrounding hills and valleys, you hit the little village of Paloma. From at least superficial appearances, Paloma looks to be very poor, with no points of scenic or historic interest, and no services or other attractions for which you might wish to stop. So keep on keeping on: turn left in town and head downhill—sometimes quite steeply—for three miles on Gwin Mine Road.

Gwin Mine used to be unpaved, which made for a perilous descent. I seem to recall having to dismount and walk part of the steep, gravel section. But recently it has been paved. Not too well, but still a huge improvement. What's more, the bridge over the Mokelumne River at the bottom has been reopened, after having been closed for some time. (Bikes were always able to use the bridge, even when it was closed to cars, but the reopening does indicate some commitment on the part of the local works department to keeping this handy link of roads in good order.)

Gwin Mine and Middle Bar are very quiet and remote, visited only occasionally by fishermen heading for the river. No one comes this way as a through-traveler. If they're in a hurry, they'll be up on Hwy 49, which is where we're heading right now.

One nearly level mile heading north along Hwy 49 brings us back to the southern fringe of Jackson and a right turn onto Broadway. You were here on the Southeast Loop, heading for Jesus Maria. Now we go the other way, beginning with the same run on Clinton Road, only heading uphill this time. (We found water at a church near the Broadway/Clinton junction. This is the first chance at resupply since somewhere along Pardee Reservoir.) From here on, you could just retrace the Southeast Loop route





Just a few feet short of teeing into Hwy 88, you bear right from Clinton onto Irish Town Road (right)—another fine bike road and a good bypass of another chunk of busy 88. Irish Town Road climbs steadily and sometimes rather steeply for two more miles, almost all the way to the town of Pine Grove. There is a little descent at the end, and then you spill out onto 88 just a few yards from Pine Grove Road. Jog across the highway and plunge downhill on that short but steep pitch you climbed early in the ride.

Now you have one final, fairly easy climb on Pine Grove...past the Aqueduct Road junction and past Indian Grinding Rock State Park. There is a small saddle by the park and one last little ascent to the summit, and then you get to finish up the day with the absolutely screaming downhill on that monster Pine Grove wall.

This is really a down-the-rabbit-hole descent. At well over 10%, and with smooth pavement and only minimal turns, it's as fast as your nerves, your skills, and your equipment will permit: easily over 50-mph for bold descenders. (But just because we say that doesn't mean you have to do it. Ride within your own abilities.) Whatever your terminal velocity, you'll be flying when you pass the junctions with Volcano-Pioneer Road and Sutter Creek Road at the bottom of the hill. Your momentum may just carry you all the way up to the front door of the hotel...and isn't it nice to end the day with a flier like that?

Assuming you did the stages in the suggested order, that wraps up the Gold Rush Tour. It may be a lot of work, but it's also a lot of play, and all of it—work or play—amidst some of the most spectacular scenery in the Golden State. We hope you have as much fun doing these rides as we had laying them out and riding them ourselves. And we hope your stay in Volcano is as pleasant as ours was. Drop us a line and let us know how it went for you.



back up Clinton and Tabeau and so forth, but in the interest of variety, and leaving no good roads unriden, we're suggesting you turn right onto Butte Mountain Road.

While this lower section of Clinton goes uphill in a gradual, steady way, Butte Mountain leaps and skips over many little ridges and swoops into a few little valleys as well...all in all, a much more interesting but also more challenging piece of real estate. The only photo we have of this remote road (above) makes it look somewhat bigger and more highway-ish than it really is. Most of the time, it feels very out of the way and middle of nowhere. Narrow and funky and twisty. In other words, a perfect cycling road. The photo of the old barn—also on Butte Mountain—does a better job of capturing the old-timey quality of the landscape into which this little road fits so nicely.

Butte Mountain eventually meanders back to Clinton, and now you get to do the upper half of this road, which was bypassed on the Southeast Loop by the downhill on Tabeau. Unlike the lower section of Clinton, this portion is not one long, steady climb: there are at least a couple of small downs in the middle of all the up and several changes in pitch on the parts that are uphill.



Accommodations in Volcano:

The St. George Hotel

PO Box 9

Volcano, CA 95689

209-296-4458

stgeorge@stgeorgehotel.com

www.stgeorgehotel.com

Volcano Union Inn

21375 The Consolation

P.O. Box 7

Volcano, CA 95689

209.296.7711

Fax: 296-7733

unioninn@volcano.net

www.volcanounioninn.com

Accommodations in Sutter Creek:

The Foxes in Sutter Creek

Main Street, PO Box 159

Sutter Creek, CA 95685

209-267-0712

www.foxesinn.com

The Grey Gables Inn

161 Hanford Street, PO Box 1687

Sutter Creek, CA 95685

209-267-1039

800-GREYGABLES

www.greygables.com

The Hanford House Inn

61 Hanford Street, Hwy 49

PO Box 1450

Sutter Creek, CA 95685

209-267-0747

800-871-5839

The Picturerock Inn

55 Eureka Street, PO Box 395

Sutter Creek, CA 95685

209-267-5500

800-399-2389

Accommodations in Jackson:

Amador Motel

12408 Kennedy Flat Road

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-0970

Best Western Amador Inn

PO Box 758

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-0211

Court Street Inn

215 Court Street

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-0416

800-200-0416

El Campo Casa Resort Motel

12548 Kennedy Flat Road

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-0100

Gate House Inn

1330 Jackson Gate Road (N. Main Street)

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-3500

800-841-1072

Jackson Gold Lodge

PO Box 1147

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-0486

The Wedgewood Inn

11941 Narcissus Road

Jackson, CA 95642

209-223-4300

800-WEDGEWD

www.wedgewoodinn.com

Camping:

Pine Acres Resort

PO Box 56

Pine Grove, CA 95665

209-296-4650

parrc@volcano.net

Open all year. Many sites for RV or camping. Group sites. Also an adjacent motel, including units with kitchenettes.

Camp facilities: showers, swimming pool, horseshoes, barbecues, group hall.

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

Pine Grove Road, between Pine Grove and Volcano

209-296-7488

Open all year. 23 sites (rated for up to six people, but most are quite small). No group site. No reservations.

Camp facilities: showers, museum.

The Gold Rush Tour

Northeast Loop

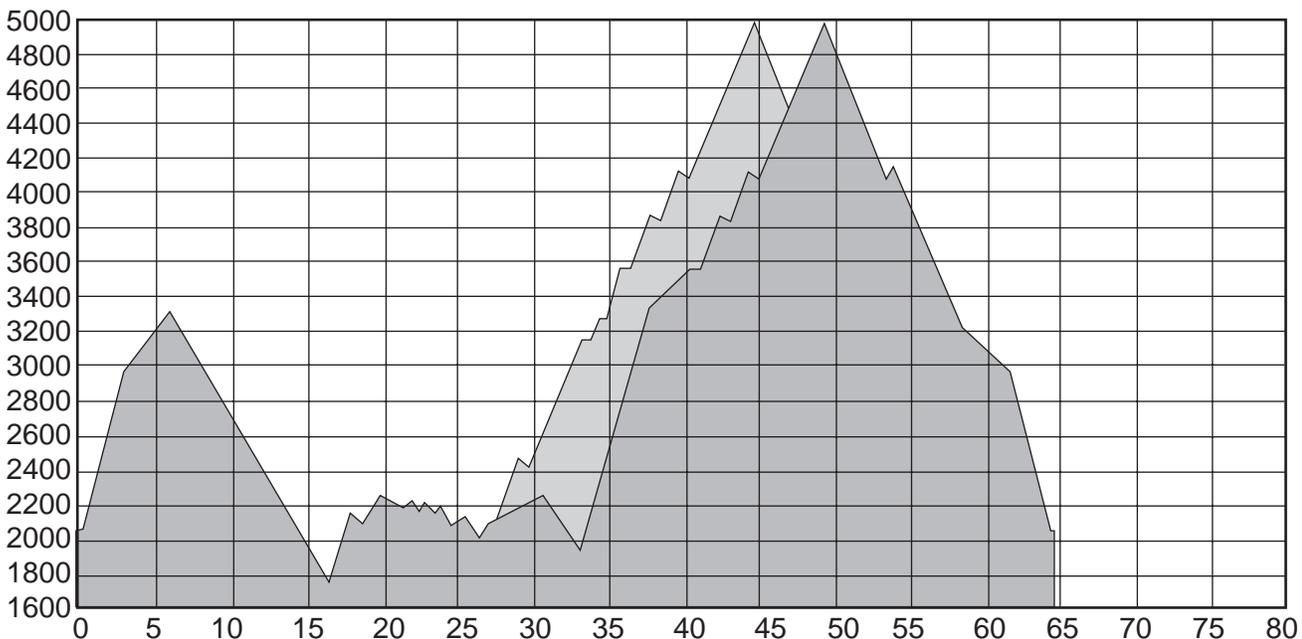
60 miles, 6500'

65 miles, 7000'

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0		North Main Street	★ Town of Volcano (2050').
0.1	R	Consolation Road	Main road through town. Becomes Rams Horn Grade.
3.2	R	Shake Ridge Road	Big climb eases off. Steeper option rejoins.
6.3	L	Fiddletown Road	Great downhill ahead!
16.8	R	Tyler Road	★ Town of Fiddletown (1700').
21.9	L	Bridgeport School Road	
24.6	L	Cedar Creek Road	
25.9	R	Shenendoah Road (E16)	Town of Mt Aukum (1950').
26.3*	R	Omo Ranch Road	Long route diverges on Mt Aukum Road.
35.3/40.2	S		Town of Omo Ranch (3480'). Long route rejoins.
44.9/49.8	R	Hwy 88	Busy highway. Fast downhill.
47.8/52.7	R	Shake Ridge Road	Easy turn to miss! Stay awake!
52.7/58.3	L		Bear left on Shake Ridge at Fiddletown Rd junction.
56.5/61.4	L	Rams Horn Grade	Steep, technical descent.
59.6/64.5	L	Consolation Road/Main Street	Town of Volcano.
59.7/64.6			St. George Hotel...finish.

*Longer, steeper option: net gain of 4.9 miles

31.4	L	Mt Aukum Road	
36.1	RL	Fairplay Road/Perry Creek Road	Jog R to L on Perry Creek. Store at junction.
37.4	L	Slug Gulch Road	Long, steep climb ahead...
43.9	L	Omo Ranch Road	Town of Omo Ranch. Rejoin short route.

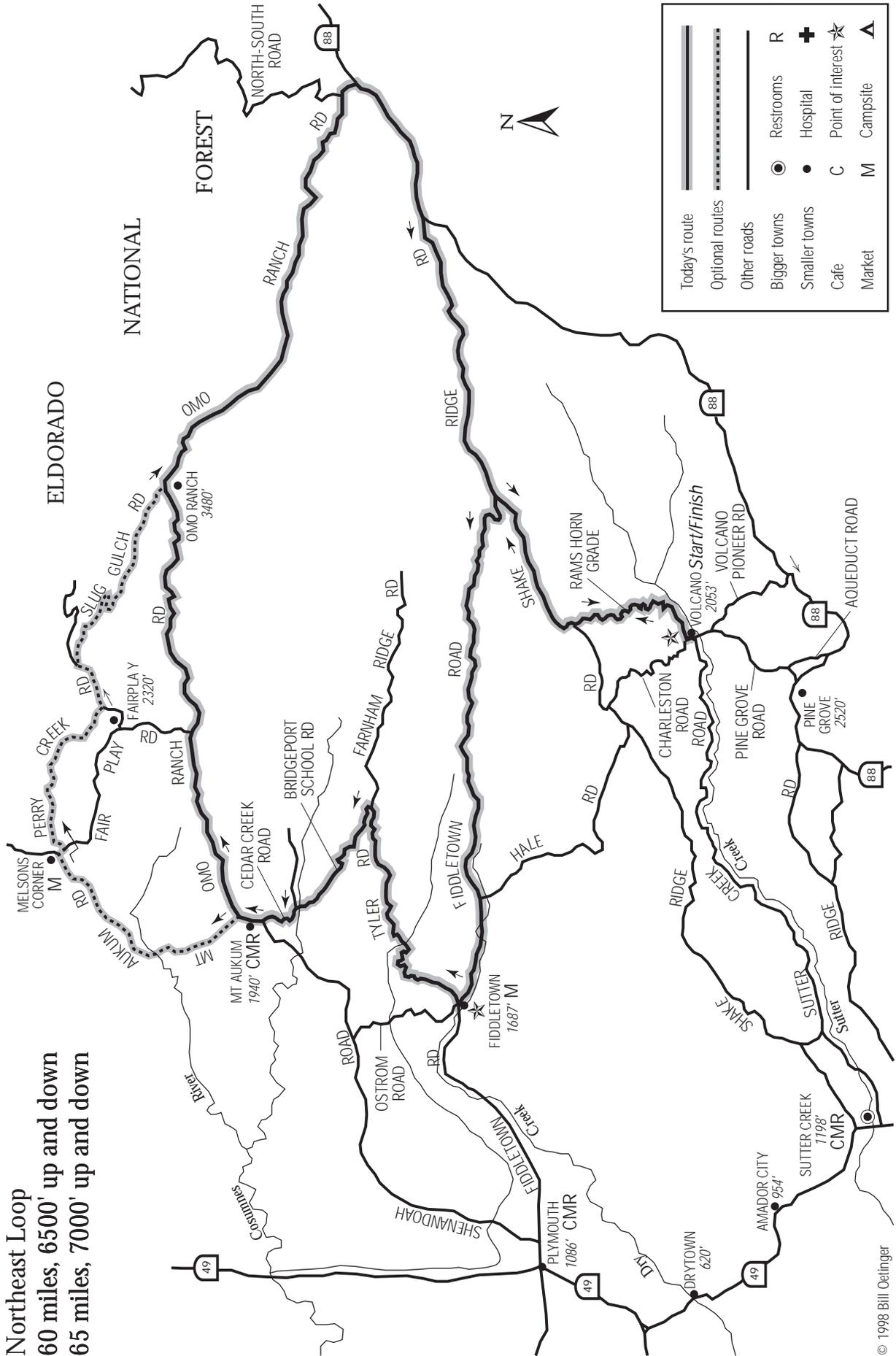


The Gold Rush Tour

Northeast Loop

60 miles, 6500' up and down

65 miles, 7000' up and down



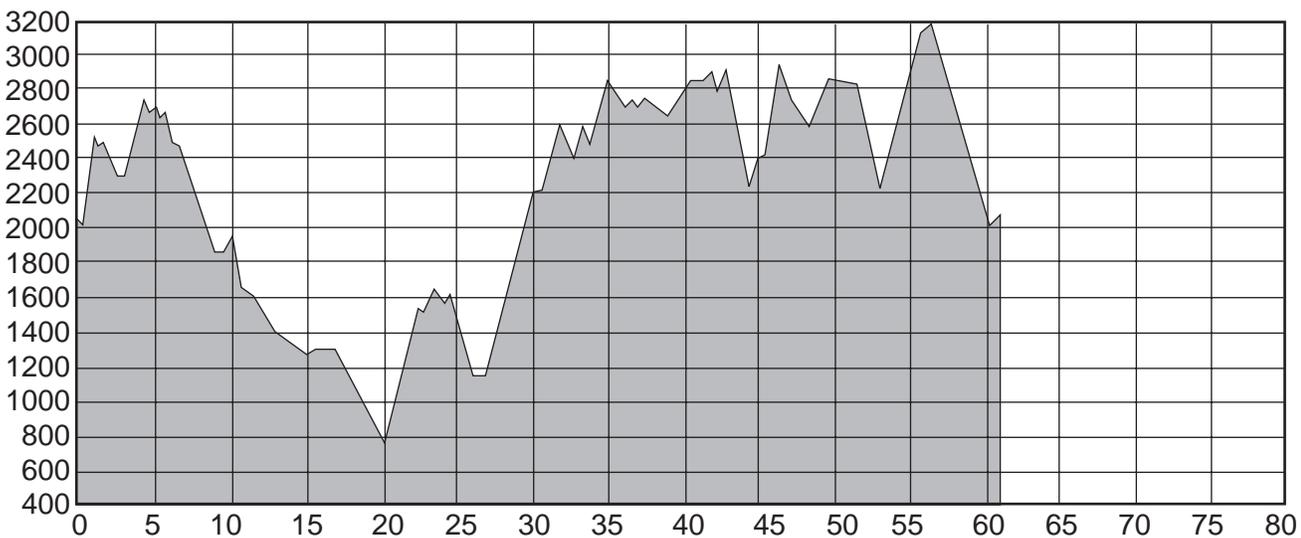
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The Gold Rush Tour

Southeast Loop

61 miles, 7500'

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	South	Main Street/Pine Grove Road	Town of Volcano.
2.4	L	Aqueduct Road	
3.4	R	Hwy 88	Short climb on busy highway
3.9	L	Tabeau Road	Leave camp. Big descent ahead...
10.3	L	Clinton Road	Still descending...
15.3	L	Broadway	Outskirts of town of Jackson (1200').
15.7	L	Hwy 49	Can be busy. Downhill, then up.
21.2	L	Historic Hwy 49 bypass	To town of Mokelumne Hill.
22.2	S	Center Street	★ Town of Mokelumne Hill (1474').
22.4	R	Zumwalt Way	Getting through the town...
22.5	L	Lafayette Street	
22.7	L	Hwy 26	Can be busy.
23.8	R	Jesus Maria Road	Big downhill ahead. Narrow, technical.
25.6	S		Bottom, near Jesus Maria Creek. Big climb ahead...
37.3	L	Railroad Flat Road	Steep ups and downs for next 20 miles.
42.6	S		Town of Railroad Flat (2600'). Store.
46.3	L		Bear left on RR Flat at stop sign.
48.2	R	Hwy 26	
49.1	S		Town of West Point. Store.
49.4	L	Red Corral Road	Still Hwy 26.
57.7	RL	Hwy 88/Volcano-Pioneer Road	Cross Hwy 88 and descend
60.2	R	Pine Grove Road	
60.7	S	Main Street	Bear right at Sutter Creek Road junction.
60.8			Into Volcano...finish

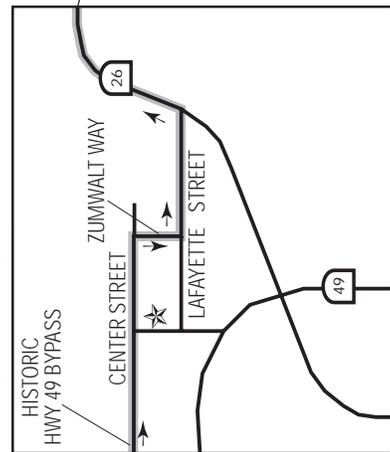
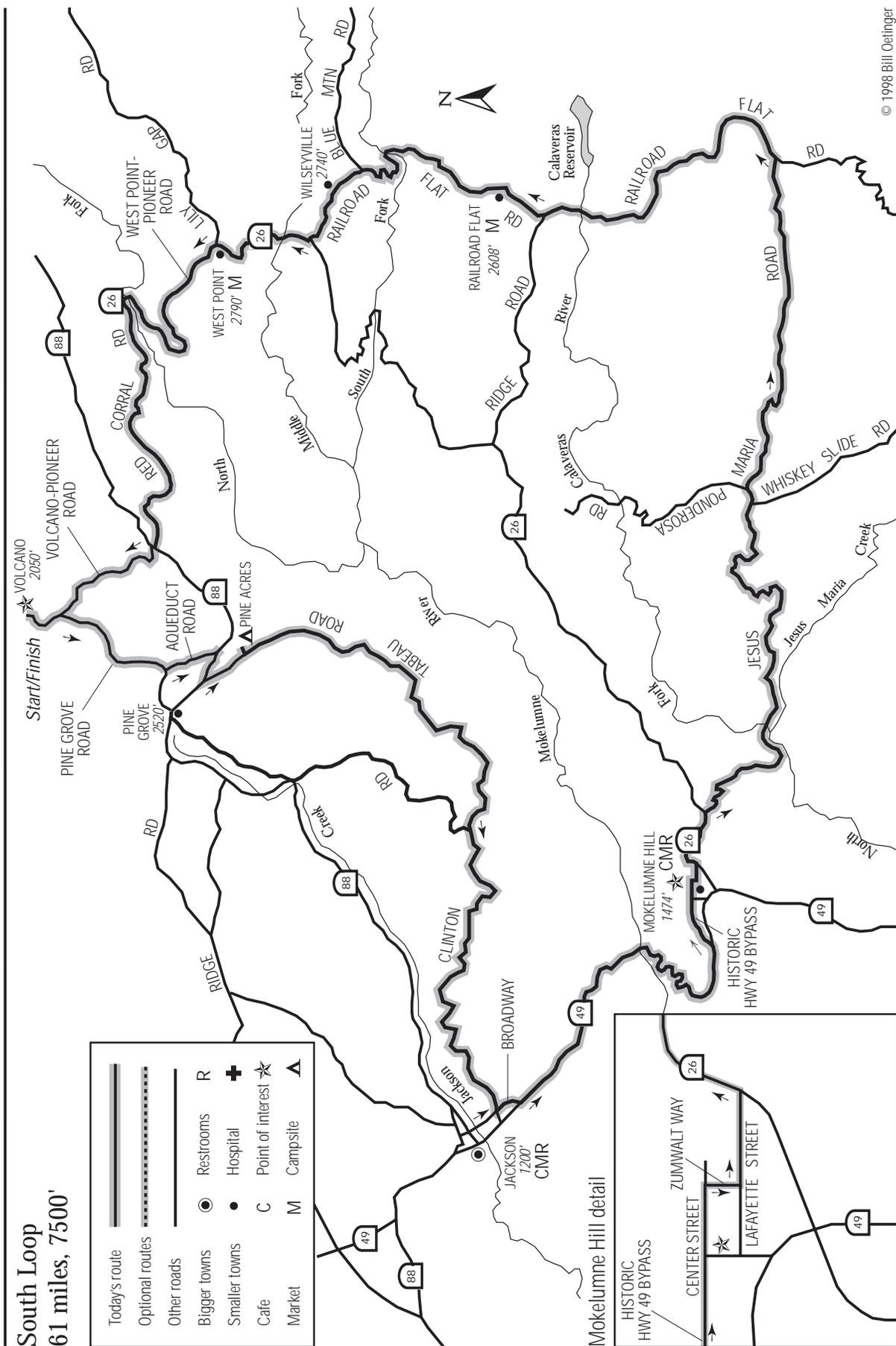


The Gold Rush Tour

South Loop

61 miles, 7500'

	Today's route		R		Point of interest
	Optional routes		Restrooms		Hospital
	Other roads		Bigger towns		Cafe
	Market		Smaller towns		Point of interest
					
					



The Gold Rush Tour

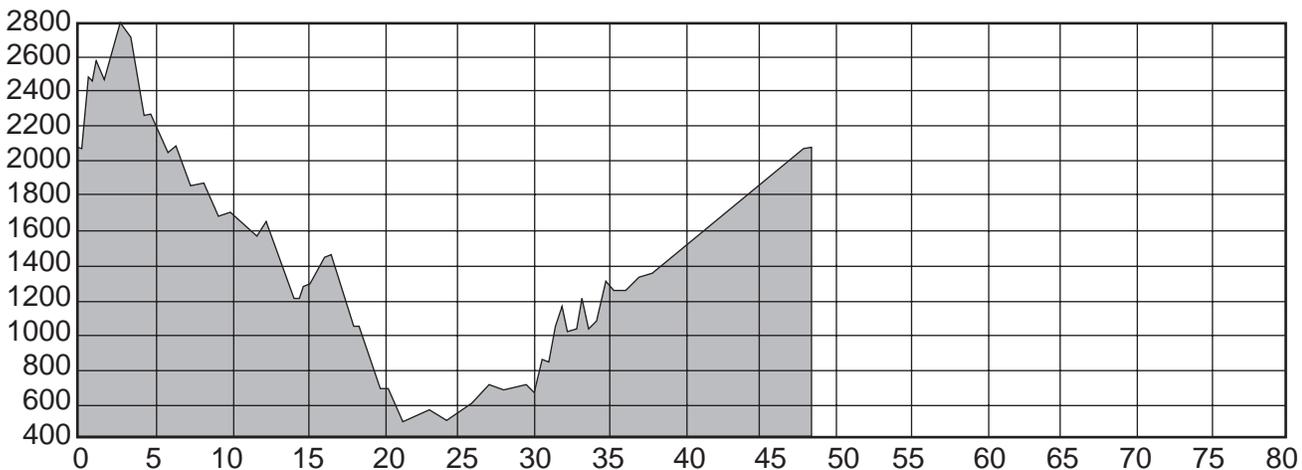
Northwest Loop

48 miles, 4000'

Bonus miles: up to 16 extra miles, modest extra elevation gain

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	North	Main Street	Town of Volcano (2050')
0.1	S	Charleston Road	Steep climb.
2.8	L	Shake Ridge Road	Great downhill ahead...
11.2	R	Shake Ridge/Gopher Flat	Bear right on Shake Ridge/Gopher Flat at Pine Gulch Rd jctn.
13.8	S	Hayden Alley	Town of Sutter Creek (1200'). Cross Hwy 49.
13.9	R	Spanish Street	Through town...
14.4	L	Sutter-Ione Road	Leave town, climb. Eventually, good descents.
21.3	R	Hwy 124	
22.3	L	Willow Creek Road	Pleasant ups and downs through the woods.
26.9	R	Hwy 16	Flat, busy. Big shoulders.
28.5	R	Hwy 49	Can be busy. Downhill to Drytown.
29.2	L	Main Street	Town of Drytown (620'). Uphill out of town.
29.4	S	New Chicago-Quartz Mtn Road	Name changes as road leaves town.
31.4	R	Turner Road	Unmarked corner at bottom of hill (see map).
32.6	LR		Jog left and right on Turner at Amador Creek Rd.
33.6	L	Stringbean Alley	
34.6	S	North Amelia Street	Town of Sutter Creek. Cross Hwy 49 to Amelia.
34.7	L	Spanish Street	
35.1	R	Hwy 49	Main street of town.
35.2	L	Church St/Sutter Creek Road	Becomes Sutter Creek Rd outside of town. Follow sign to Volcano and Daffodil Hill. Long, easy uphill.
47.5	L	Pine Grove Rd/Main Street	Into Volcano.
47.6			Finish.

Bonus miles: at junction of Willow Creek and Hwy 16, L on Hwy 16 > R on Latrobe Road > R on Old Sacramento Road to Hwy 49 in town of Plymouth. Short option: R on Hwy 49 back to Hwy 16 junction & continue on basic route. Net gain of approx. 8 miles. Long option: Cross 49 to Shenandoah Road > Bear L on Shenandoah at Fiddletown Road junction > R on Shenandoah School Road > L on Shenandoah Road to Hwy 49 in Plymouth > L on Hwy 49 to rejoin basic route. Net gain of approx. 16 miles.

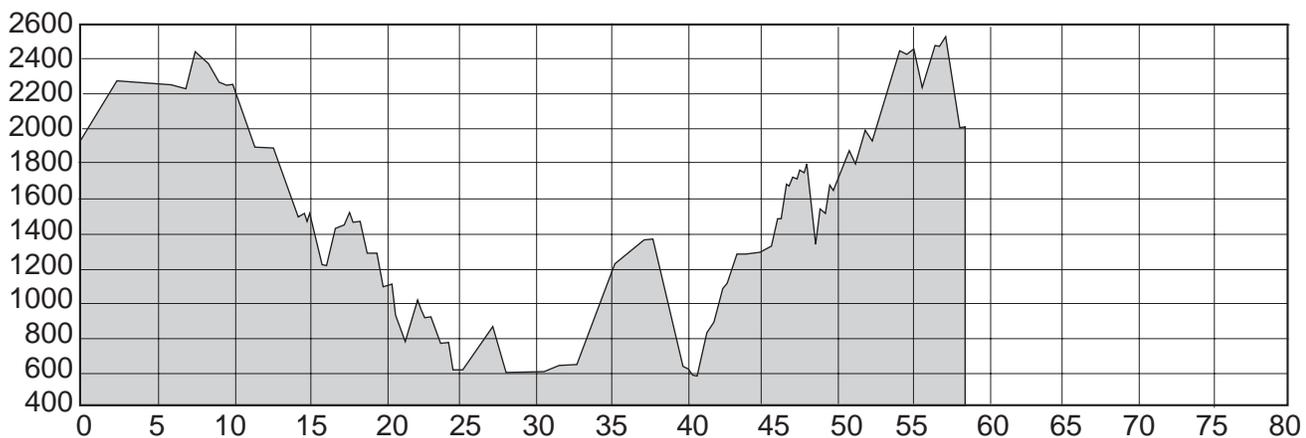


The Gold Rush Tour

Southwest Loop

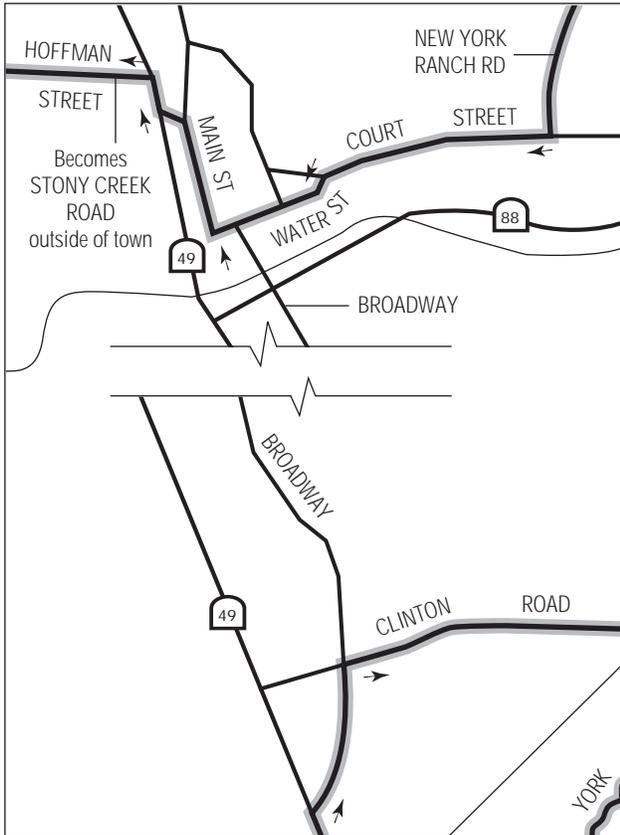
58 miles, 6000'

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	South	Main Street/Pine Grove Rd	Leave Volcano (2053').
0.6	L	Volcano-Pioneer Road	Uphill, but not as steeply as Pine Grove.
2.7	R	Hwy 88	Can be busy, but adequate shoulders.
5.2	R	Aqueduct Road	Nearly level, quiet.
6.2	L	Pine Grove Road	Down a little, then up...steeply.
6.8	R	Hwy 88	Town of Pine Grove (2520'). Busy highway.
8.5	R	Climax Road	Good descent...
11.6	L	Ridge Road	Level.
12.5	L	New York Ranch Road	More good downhill.
16.7	R	Court Street	Town of Jackson (1200').
16.9	LR	Water Street/Main Street	Jog left to immediate right onto Main Street
17.6	RL	Hwy 49/Hoffman St	Cross highway and turn up hill: "To Pardee Dam."
18.1		Stony Creek Road	Steep climb eases off. Road name changes.
26.3			Pardee Reservoir. Ride across Jackson Creek Spillway.
27.6	L	Pardee Dam Road	Sign says: "Pardee Dam 2; Valley Springs 7."
29.6			★ Cross Pardee Dam. Mokelumne River canyon.
31.4	L	Campo Seco Road	
32.3	L	Paloma Road	A hefty climb...
36.7	L	Gwin Mine Road	Town of Paloma (1346'). No services. Descending.
39.9	S	Middle Bar Road	Bridge over Mokelumne River. Lousy pavement on climb.
42.8	L	Hwy 49	
43.9	R	Broadway	Outskirts of Jackson.
44.3	R	Clinton Road	
44.7	R	Butte Mountain Road	Mostly—but not entirely—uphill.
48.9	R	Clinton Road	Mostly—but not entirely—uphill.
52.9	R	Irish Town Road	Just before Hwy 88 junction. Mostly uphill.
54.9	R	Hwy 88	On busy highway for only a second...
55.1	L	Pine Grove Road	Down, then up, then a big, steep down.
58.1	S	Main Street	Bear right at Sutter Creek junction uphill to Volcano
58.2			St George Hotel...finish.

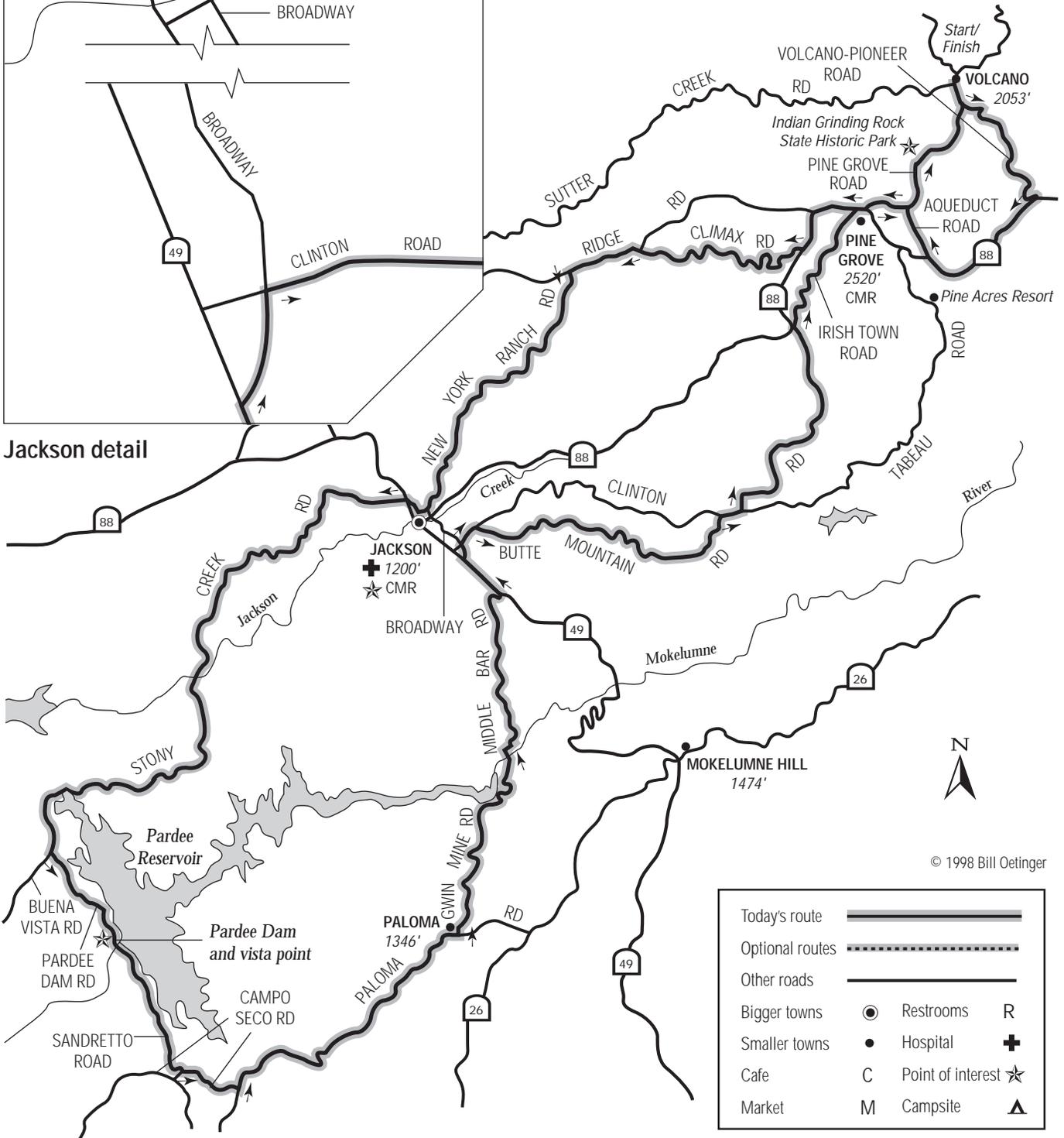


The Gold Rush Tour

Southwest Loop
58 miles, 6000' up and down



Jackson detail



Today's route			
Optional routes			
Other roads			
Bigger towns		Restrooms	R
Smaller towns		Hospital	+
Cafe	C	Point of interest	☆
Market	M	Campsite	▲