

Olympic Peninsula Tour

From Sunday, August 12 to Friday, August 24 thirteen Canadian cyclists completed an 850 km anti-clockwise loop around the Olympic Peninsula. Our leader, Doris Maron, planned well to keep us off the main highways whenever possible. However, this did often mean chip-seal roads and hills.

Our first day started in Larabee State Park south of a Bellingham suburb where we had to park our cars. We got our first taste of the famous Chuckanut Drive; Bruce and Phil carried beer on their bikes back to the campsite to have with the fresh Saanich corn Yvonne had smuggled across the border. No coffee in the morning but we survived.

Next day we crossed the awe-inspiring Deception Pass, walking our bikes along a



narrow path and wishing all tourists were as thin as cyclists! We spent the night on the Fairgrounds outside Port Townsend after having a vegetarian meal that used all the bowls in the truck.

It was a two-pages of instructions day for us to follow the Olympic Discovery Trail with its multiple twists and turns as we headed to Elwha Dam RV Park. Despite being cold from the fog many of us enjoyed ice-cream in Port Angeles before continuing west.

Next day someone noticed that the instructions were for 7 turns only to get to Forks. However, it was a 96 km day with empty logging trucks following us and full ones approaching us as we headed out. A memorable part of the ride was a downhill with lots of turns....pretended we were on the Tour de France.

Rest day in Forks saw some heading down to the La Push on the ocean; others enjoyed Phil practising a senior citizen's version of Presley's Are You Lonesome Tonight as well as other oldies. It was a peaceful couple of hours.



We carried on to Quinalt Lake where we had a motel stay. The brave ones swam and met some Americans who apologized for Trump. Dinner was at the Salmon House where we surprised Phil with a birthday cake.

Next day we were on country roads and came to Montesano which had

one traffic light.

Then we got to the larger Elma which had a traffic light and bike lanes.

The hostess at the Elma RV Park greeted us with fresh home-made chocolate chip cookies and a lush green lawn on which to pitch tents. Again we had campfire songs without a fire.

On our way to Belfair State Park



for camping we went through Shelton which had 3 traffic lights, road construction and a steep hill to negotiate.

To bypass the busy highways of Bremerton the following day we were routed through some steep hills, then we crossed the Hood Canal Bridge

(broad shoulder but lots of small debris) to climb in and out of many seaside towns and finally arrived at Fort Townsend State Park (looked the way BC Parks used to look.....lots of trees and ferns). That night Bruce and Phil had a real fire to sing by; Phil did a great impression of the coal miner story of Beyond the Fringe fame. Next day we all cycled into Port Townsend for sightseeing.

The last evening on the road we spent at Fidalgo County Inn and had dinner earned by our budget-wise cooking. The pre-dinner beer was free too. Doris acquiesced and next morning let us make a straight run to our cars, the border and the ferries.

Some thoughts from the author:

Trains, Planes, and ??: At Larabee State Park coal trains ran all night, with a deepening swoosh and 3 long blasts each time. At Deception Pass Park 3 planes roared to land at the base on Whidbey Island just as we were falling asleep. At Elwha Dam planes were circling overhead as darkness fell....the moral is to bring earplugs as everyone else did.

Canadians are not used to: flags flying from houses, painted on mailboxes and other visible projections; election signs for county sheriff, prosecutor, judge, clerk, PUD, senator for 10th district, etc; sudden gun shots from nearby while in camp or while cycling in the middle of nowhere; dim air-conditioned taverns open in early morning with patrons having beer or coffee; the lack of J-cloths for purchase.

Favourite places to eat: the BreadFarm Bakery in Edison (no coffee though), Sirens (funky upstairs pub) or Velocity (coffee) in Port Townsend, and Knead and Feed Restaurant in Coupeville (great cinnamon buns).

Camping trips are more work but our group developed a great comraderie as we set up camp, cooked, washed dishes and sat around a non-existent campfire. There were 13 of us.....here is a snapshot, in no



particular order, of the cyclists who managed to complete the tour, one way or another.

Doris: got up really early to make coffee for everyone

let the group work out how to do things; no micro-managing
great directions and extraneous notes on breaks and for
shopping

Bruce: great support for Doris and the group

provided entertainment with accordion and mandolin
enthusiasm plus

Christine: strong cyclist and rode on “rest” days

provided vegetarian meals with precise instructions

Colleen: helped Doris make coffee

triathlete....looked for a swim or run after cycling 100 km
with Jake lived on and worked a halibut boat for years out of P.

Rupert

Dianne: handled the stress of selling her house in Kelowna while on
the road

cyclist and skier with a new cycling and skiing partner
flexible in cooking from what was in the truck

Doug: a long-time skier

engineer who was lucky to be part of development of Whistler in
old days

Gary C.: loading master....not easy but much easier with a small group
trying out his new e-bike.....was very considerate on the hills

enjoyed “fixing” things for others

Gary E: was very observant and showed a quick wit
starting a new life with Dianne in Kelowna

Jake: with Colleen was a halibut fisherman for years
was a eager story-teller and fountain of information on many
subjects

he and Colleen are new members of CCCTS

Jean: often pitched in to help other cooking teams
loved to create fun for the group

Karin: was always
there to do dishes
lives in Whistler
with Doug
made fantastic
camp-meal from what was in
the truck at the end of the
tour

Phil: naturalist who
has been birding in
numerous places in the
world
played guitar
with Bruce; quiet man with
depths



shared licorice with those lucky enough to cycle with him

Yvonne: will bring ear-plugs and label utensils next time

was wagon master for the first time; small group made it easier

was thrilled to ride whole distance on new knee

CCCTS originated with camping trips for cyclists. We are lucky to have equipment built by former members which make camping with a group possible. I hope that there will be more in the future...if Bruce has his way, there will be.

It was really enjoyable to renew friendships and to meet new people who love cycling and are willing to camp to make a trip possible. Thank you to Doris and everyone for a great trip.

Photos by Doris Maron; text by Yvonne McLean