

Huasna Road

Olympic gold medallist Alexi Grewal used to train on Huasna Road. It's a great place to get out of town and exercise your legs. Traffic is light. The scenery is nice. The road is challenging enough to give you whatever degree of workout you desire. Round trip from San Luis Obispo is fifty miles.

Three main routes lead eastward from San Luis Obispo. Any one of them can take you to the old Huasna townsite. Starting at Mission Plaza, Route 227 takes you out of downtown onto a class 2 painted bike lane. From the intersection with Tank Farm Road, here are the options:

Orcutt Road - Eight and one-half miles to Lopez Drive, turn right two miles to Huasna Road on the left.

The good: Rolling hills through vineyards. Not a lot of traffic. Occasional class 2 bike lanes. Baileyana Winery tasting room (and rest rooms).

The bad: Most of Orcutt Road is narrow with no shoulders. Traffic tends to be fast.

State Highway 227 - Nine and one-half miles to Huasna Road/Lopez Drive, turn left one and one-half miles to Huasna Road turnoff on the right.

The good: Class 2 bike lane with wide shoulders until you reach Corbett Canyon Road intersection. Lots of vineyards. Watch airplanes land and take off from the airport. Find out where Cold Canyon landfill is. You get out into open country. There's a hearty climb over the tail end of the Irish Hills. A nice descent takes you down Carpenter Canyon to Arroyo Grande. Through a miracle of Caltrans engineering, there is one mile of climbing and three miles of descending. (How do they do that?)

The bad: From the intersection with Corbett Canyon Road, Highway 227 is mostly rough, narrow, uneven pavement. New sections with painted shoulders show a change in engineering standards since the highway was originally constructed.

Corbett Canyon Road - Five and one-half miles skirting the hills and tying back into Route 227 one-half mile west of Huasna Road/Lopez Drive.

The good: After a couple of small climbs and descents, the road is mostly level. Light traffic. Lots of rural ranchettes. Good pavement. Horse country (if you like the smell of horses).

The bad: Narrow road with no shoulders. Corbett Canyon Vineyards tasting room (and rest rooms) are no longer open to the public. Horse country (if you don't like the smell of horses).

Huasna Road - Ten miles of rolling hills with a generally upward gradient to the fork where Huasna Townsite Road and Arroyo Grande Huasna Road intersect.

The good: Light traffic. Good pavement. Lots of small farms and ranchettes. Fields of flowers. About four miles from Lopez Drive, the canyon closes in. Big oaks and sycamores shade the road. Tar Spring Creek meanders alongside. Traffic thins out as you continue east. Rolling hills let you challenge yourself as much as you want. As you approach Huasna townsite, there's a little climb leaving Canyon de los Alisos and dropping into Huasna Valley.

The bad: Narrow road, no shoulders. Lots of poison oak on both sides of the road.

Huasna Townsite Road (right fork) - Three miles of rolling hills with a downward gradient to a wooden bridge that crosses the Huasna River. This is the northernmost arm of Twitchell Reservoir.

The good: The old Huasna School, now a private home. A small community of friendly residents. Large ranches, miles of views across the valley. Wide open country.

The bad: The pavement ends at the Huasna River bridge. Road bikes turn back.

Arroyo Grande Huasna Road (left fork) - Two and one-half miles over a ridgetop to a wooden bridge that crosses the Huasna River (same river, different bridge).

The good: A nice, winding, half-mile climb out of the Huasna Valley. A long mile descent with hairpin turns down to the Huasna River. Lots of oaks. You're likely to see more bicycles than motor vehicles. Opportunities to see wildlife. Splendid isolation.

The bad: Watch for the cattle guard at the top of the ridge. Watch out for cows on the road. Watch out for what cows leave behind them. The pavement ends at the Huasna River bridge. Road bikes turn back.

Return: If you go up, you come down. You can crank up some good speed heading back to Lopez Drive. From there, your return can be as creative and adventurous as you are. You can ride into Arroyo Grande and take Highway 1 back. Price Canyon Road from Pismo Beach to Highway 227 is a nice ride. Keep in mind that you don't have to be Alexi Grewal to enjoy bicycling in San Luis Obispo County. Just pick out a route on the map and go for it.