

## The Ride To Hell

My friend Tony Leap had this brilliant idea. We would start on our bicycles in Morro Bay. We would ride up Old Creek Road. We would cross the highway and continue riding on Santa Rosa Creek Road until we got to Cambria. Then we would turn around and ride back the same way. And end up where we started, in Morro Bay. Brilliant!

Old Creek is a popular route for local cyclists. That's because it is scenic and challenging. Take a brief climb out of Cayucos for a view of Whale Rock Reservoir, then descend to Cottontail Road and climb again to the summit, 1,400 feet above the ocean.

Cross Highway 46 and continue riding on Santa Rosa Creek Road. A nice little climb and descent bring you into Cienagas Valley, with oak groves, cow pastures, fields of flowers and a lovely creek. Then you climb The Wall.

At the top, you can see all the way to the ocean – and it's all downhill from here, an E-ticket ride to Cambria. The first few miles are steep, and bumpy. Check your brakes. You may want to stop midway and pour water on your tire rims to cool them.

At the end of the road is Cambria, and some nice places for coffee or lunch. Linn's and Main Street Grill are a couple of favorites.

Then you turn around and ride back. This is what displays the true brilliance of Tony's idea and why we call this the Ride to Hell.

The first five miles are nice. They are flat. The scenery is bucolic. The only thing you have to watch out for is car drivers who have no concept that they share the road with someone else. Usually, of course, they are not.

After passing Linn's Farm, the canyon narrows, oak trees overhang the road, the creek sings beside you and you might see wild turkeys.

Eleven miles out, you emerge from tree cover. The road pitches up. After a long, sweat-drenched struggle, you arrive at the summit. Time to take pictures, stand around, admire the view.

A fast descent of The Wall and through the valley brings you back to Highway 46 and Old Creek Road.

It doesn't take long to get down to Cayucos and then return to Morro Bay.

The first time I rode this with Tony, round trip took us six hours to ride 52 miles. We climbed a total of 5,000 feet.

Old Creek Road has two miles of 8 ½% grade. The Wall is a half mile of 16%. Santa Rosa Creek Road has three short pitches that are more than 24%.