

Lime Mountain Bike Ride

North county winter weather can be cold and dreary or crisp and stimulating, depending a little bit upon your attitude and a little more upon whether you're pedaling in soggy fog or bright sunshine. An invigorating ride that will test your attitude begins in Morro Bay and climbs a few thousand feet to road's end on the south side of Lake Nacimiento. Round trip is about 80 miles. Take food and water.

Morro Bay to Highway 46: 12 miles of mostly uphill, some of it as steep as 8 per cent.

Begin at Lila Keiser Park and ride north on Highway 1 to Old Creek Road, turn right and climb past Whale Rock, Cottontail Creek and Santa Rita road.

The good: Gorgeous, out-of-the-way scenery as you pass small farms and orchards.

The bad: Old Creek Road is narrow and steep. Be prepared to slow down and grind it out and be aware of vehicles coming from behind.

Old Creek Road to Jack Creek Road: 4 miles of riding on a highway shoulder through mountain ranches.

From Old Creek, turn right on 46 and go up and down a few hills past York Mountain.

The good: Wide shoulders that were repaved in 2001 and are still pretty smooth.

The bad: A bit of a climb over York Mountain. Limited sight distance for the left turn onto Jack Creek Road.

Side trip: Dover Canyon Road provides scenic isolation but dead-ends after three miles.

Alternate Route: York Mountain Road takes you parallel to 46 past the York Mountain winery. A steep climb, then a steep descent lead to a winding road through a gorgeous canyon that returns you to Highway 46 near Jack Creek Road.

Highway 46 to Adelaida: 10 miles through the rolling hills west of Paso Robles.

This is what people mean when they say "great cycling country." Light traffic, twisty roads with challenging rollers and always something good to look at. Take Jack Creek Road to Vineyard, turn left and ride to the intersection with Adelaida Road.

The good: Few cars, pretty country.

The bad: No shoulders. Watch the downhill curve just south of Peachy Canyon Road – believe the signs that urge slow speed and caution. The shaded part is almost always covered with wet leaves.

Alternate Route: Turn off Vineyard onto Willow Creek Road. Ride 5 miles to Peachy Canyon, turn left and rejoin Vineyard at the stop sign.

Adelaida to Chimney Rock Road: 2 ½ miles of rollers. Stop at the historical marker and find out about the community of Adelaida. Stop at the cemetery and soak up a little county history.

The good: Isolation and great scenery.

The bad: Still no shoulders.

Side trip: Follow Klau Mine Road to Cypress Mountain. It's bumpy and narrow and charming. At the end of the pavement, turn back to Adelaida and continue north.

Chimney Rock Road to the foot of Lime Mountain: 8 miles of vineyards and ranchland. Cross two arms of Lake Nacimiento. Stop at the end of the county road. You will know when to stop because signs at a cattle guard tell you that you are about to enter private property. Don't do it. Turn back.

The good: Stunning green meadows, few cars, a beautiful castle at Justin Vineyards.

The bad: A bit of a drop going west becomes a bit of a climb when you return – and still no shoulders.

Coming back is just as much fun as going out was. Don't forget to take food and water.