

Hello gang!

Stephen Kenny and I pre rode the Madera Canyon 300k on Saturday. Here are some highlights.

CHANGES:

1. There have been some slight changes to the route. There's nothing of much consequence, but a few of the roads are now better. If you have previously downloaded the cue sheet or RWGPS, you should do so again. Refresh your browser before downloading anything. I will also have the latest cue sheet printed for you at the start.
2. The **START TIME has been changed to 07:00!** This will allow you to see the sunrise while on "A" Mountain, spend 1 hour less in the cold and sleep an extra hour. You're welcome.

NOTES:

This was the first time I have ridden Madera Canyon and a few of the other roads on the route. So, a lot of what I'll say is from a first-timer's perspective. You can view the 300k as 3 distinct sections. **Links are to photos and/or videos of the specific areas. You should check them out.**

1) **First 100k** - Pretty flat and fast (~1700' elevation gain). The only climb is ["A" Mountain](#) and that's short and sweet with awesome views of the [sunrise over the mountains](#) and the sun gleaming off the buildings in downtown Tucson. This is definitely a Kodak moment! There's an info control up there just past the "A" and before the descent. After the descent (watch for the closed gates!), you'll make your way onto the Tucson gem, Loop Bike Trail. It will likely be pretty chilly thru there as the trail meanders along the Santa Cruz (dry) river. There's a detour required on the path, but it's very well signed and easy to follow. The RWGPS and cue sheet are updated to reflect the detour. At the end of the bike path (at Valencia Rd), we need to make a left turn. The road might be busy. If it is, just make a left turn onto the sidewalk (before crossing) and ride 200 meters to a crosswalk light. Hit the walk button and then make the left turn safely. This has also been added to the RWGPS and cue sheet.

After the bike path, you'll make your way to the retirement community of Green Valley where the signs say that "Only bikes and golf carts may use bike lane." Welcome to codger town! After you race a few golf carts (and, of course, beat them), you'll head further south for Amado and the [Longhorn Grille](#). Yippe-ki-yay! You might consider consuming some calories here so they can digest while you make your way over to Madera Canyon. You're close enough to Mexico here that the road signs are in kilometers, not miles.

2) **Middle 100k** - Get your climbing gears lubed up (~4300' elevation gain). Madera Canyon has 2 distinct sections. The first 7 miles of the climb are a [constant 3% grade](#). Take your time and don't over-cook this! You'll be tempted to go hard because of its gradual nature. That wouldn't be smart. After the first 7 miles, you'll get a 1/2 mile reprieve where you can [contemplate what an animal you](#) are for breezing up the climb so far. The last 5 miles will [start at 5%](#) and [gradually](#), and [continuously](#), increase in incline [up to 13%](#). The last 1.5 miles are 10%-13%. I was told a long time ago that "walking is just another gear." YMMV. [At the top](#) will be lunch! There was still snow on the surrounding peaks last Saturday. Your reward for your work is to get to sit and enjoy the beauty while you have lunch.

After lunch, you'll get to descend. **YOU MUST START HOLDING YOUR BRAKES FROM THE BEGINNING!!!** The roads are smooth and there are some B&Bs, hikers and picnickers up there with you enjoying the day. I went from [0-30 mph in about 5 seconds](#). It's steep. It's fast. It's beautiful. Don't ruin your day by being dumb! Take it slowly and [safely and enjoy it](#). You'll still [descend quickly](#).

After the long descent off of Madera, you'll almost immediately start the long, gentle climb to Helmet Peak. It's about 14 miles of 2-3%. It's not a hard climb, but your legs might be a little bit rubbery after Madera - mine were. Helmet Peak is in the [middle of a mining area](#) that goes back to the 1800's. Today there are active copper mines as well as lead, zinc, silver, gold and molybdenum that have been active. Helmet Peak (the rock) is quite an [interesting formation](#), another Kodak moment. The descent from Helmet Peak after the Fire Station is long and fun with new pavement! About the time you get tired of descending (yea, right!) you'll take a slight diversion off Mission Rd to actually [see the Mission](#). The pavement sucks, but the [Mission is fantastic!](#) I had never [seen it up close](#) and it's really gorgeous. Photo time!

200k riders will head back to the finish from here. They will be done with the climbing! 300k riders will still have some "lumps" to navigate through Saguaro National Park (SNP) West. After you exit the [McCain Loop](#) in SNP, the climbing is DONE! Whew!

3) **Last 100k** - Flat and fast! (<1000' elevation gain). After the fast [descent through SNP](#), the route takes you for a tour of the Sonoran desert to far west Marana. I had never been out there. The desert is in bloom, the roads are good, the traffic is light and you can make good time. It was a fun stretch to "rest" my legs after the middle 100k. I was able to "rest" because Stephen did all the work up front! There's an Info Control at the far NW corner of the route. Just after you make the turn, you'll need to stop and answer a question on your brevet card. There's no food there, so make sure you note the food/water locations on the map/cue sheet so that you don't find yourself running on empty.

After a long stretch mostly southerly, the last highlights are thru the University. The [downtown area was Bumping!](#) when we rode through. You'll be just a couple miles from the finish when riding thru there. Depending on your plans after the ride, this could be a really great place to stop and have dinner. Check the time if you're hungry. The In-N-Out Burger at the finish is open till 01:30. There is a Circle K (Yuck!) just before the finish if you're really Jonesing for another convenience store meal. Or, just stop downtown at one of the great eateries there. Enjoy a meal, get a receipt, then when you get back to the finish just mark your finish time on your card. No need to get another receipt. 200k riders may do the same. You'll be going thru downtown much earlier, but the food is just as good! If you are on your bike, make sure you can see it or secure it while you eat. Thieves happen and bikes disappear. After the Bumping downtown, you'll [ride thru the University](#). No traffic, nice pavement, well lit and serene.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

This was a really fun ride. There was enough climbing to make it interesting but not so much to make it grueling. There was a lot of varied scenery throughout. All the photos and videos may be found here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/pr6ua4cgWRyWpx5Z8> Unfortunately, Google killed the beautiful HD videos but you'll get the picture.

Stephen and I will be running support next week. If you have any dietary preferences, let us know. We'll try to accommodate your requests.

Questions? Comments? See you next week!

-Mike