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Southern Sierra Mountain Bike Trails, , Southern Sierra Mountain Bike Trails, 2001, 0971203601, 9780971203600, . .

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Located in the Southern Sierra Nevada Mountain this ride is definitely an epic ride with some of the best riding and most incredible views that I have enjoyed in Southern California. You will get over 32 miles of riding in on 98 percent single track. With the low point at the rides end in Kernville at 2,700 feet and the high point of 9,900 feet on Sherman Peak you are guaranteed to get in some epic descents. The primary descent is "The Plunge" where this wonderful single track drops 5,000 feet in just 8 miles. This ride is not an all fun and games ride as there are a couple of grinder climbs that combined with the altitude will certainly wipe the smile off your face for a while. This ride is well worth the drive to Kernville and the hour long shuttle from just about anywhere. Take the Plunge and you will not be disappointed!

Directions: Get yourself to Kernville. Try this Mapquest link. Kernville is about an hour drive from Bakersfield, CA on highway 178. Kernville is one of those places you can miss if you blink twice so it is pretty hard to get lost once you are in town. If you are coming in from Bakersfield, the shuttle service is on the left just before you cross the Kern river bridge. Hang a right just before the bridge and you can park your car along a green belt alongside the river.

HAZARDS/WARNING: This is a long route, bring plenty of water. There are a couple of streams along the way but you will certainly want to filter and treat water from those sources should you choose to use them. Blindly uploading up my track data into your GPS and hitting the trail is inviting bad luck. This is not a terribly difficult route to follow but you need to have some experience with map reading and visual navigation. A map, compass and the skills to use them should be considered a vital item in your "toolkit" for this route in addition to a GPS you may carry.

Shuttle service: This is a shuttle ride (I prefer to call this a point-to-point ride). When I did this ride we used Mountain River Adventures located right in town. The rate when we went was \$25 each with a four person minimum. You can do the shuttle yourself by parking one car in town and with the other, cross the bridge (You will be on Kernville Rd). At the T-junction head north on Sierra Way (Which is also known as Mountain Road 99). Shortly after passing through the small hamlet of Roads End (Which is clearly not the end of the road) You will make a right and a road that states the mileage to Sherman Pass and Kennedy Meadows. (If you cross over the river you have gone too far). Drive up what seems like many miles. When you stop going up you are at Sherman Pass. (It is also marked very well with a parking lot).

RIDE NOTES: I had been itching to do this ride for over a year so when I heard some folks from NorCal were coming down to do this ride we all made plans to meet up and get the ride done. My

usual riding suspects drove up to Bakersfield the night before and got some cheap accommodations. We met Steve Wolf, Dennis Baker (The Ogre), and Bryan Lee from up north the next morning and headed up to Kernville for what would be the most incredible riding I have every done in SoCal.

We parked our vehicles along a little greenbelt by the river in town and took all our stuff across the street to Mountain River Adventures and loaded up. Once loaded up and on the road it was about an hour until the van dropped us off at Sherman Pass at 9,200 feet. After getting unloaded and all setup we decided to clock in a little bonus mileage and climb up the Sherman Peak trail to (you guessed it) Sherman Peak. The first thing I noticed was that the air was darn thin compared to my normal sea level efforts. So after about 200 yards of my normal effort I had to dial it back a few notches and work some gear I normally don't use. The scenery was already pretty darn cool with tall pines, interesting trail features, plenty of mountains off in the distance. The trail up to the peak was 2.5 miles long and it was all rideable with the last 1/8th of a mile or so being technical enough that when combined with my wussy sea-level lungs I did some pushing. (I was not alone in making foot prints :-)

Once up on top of the peak the views were absolutely fabulous 360 degrees of sensory overload views including Mount Whitney. We did the prerequisite poseur thing with plenty of pictures and then signed in a guest book we found in a sealed container. Once we had our fill of the peak, we fired up our video gear (there was three of us on the peak with video gear) and headed back down the trail. The first part of the trail that we hiked on the way up was rideable going down with some nice technical sections with some extremely white rocks and boulders that kept you on your toes. On the way back to Sherman Pass there was one boulder field that had us off our bike for 30 or 40 yards. After that it was hoot all the way back to the pass.

Once back at the pass we hit the Cannell trail which starts off by heading downhill with some motorcycle whoop-dee-doos. The trail was sandy in a few spots and after about half a mile the trail flattened out and you then started climbing. After a little over 2 and 1/4 miles you get a quite reprise from the mild climbing as gone down to Mosquito Meadows. As the name implies you should keep moving or you will find out why they call it that. It is tough to do as the Meadow is quite pretty. After the meadow you have a mile long grinder up to a saddle. Once again I was reminded that I was above 9,000 feet. Once up the saddle at 9,400 feet we took a break and knocked back some snacks.

Once we got rolling again we were treated to a most wonderful 2 mile descent down into Big Meadow. The descent was really buffed up near the top with some awesome swiping turns which egged you on to see just how much you could push your speed through the turns. The trail gradually got looser and rockier with some small drops here and there. While technical it was the kind of technical you can still blast down. By the time we rolled into Big Meadow at around the 8.5 to 9 mile mark (from Sherman Pass) we were all grinning from ear-to-ear.

Big Meadow is quite striking in contrast to the rest of the ride as it is so big and flat. This also where you ride on your first section of fire road. You will follow the fire road around the north side and west sides of the meadow. The Cannell trail will peel off to the left about 1.7 miles after you enter the meadow (between waypoints 12 and 13) and you will be back on singletrack for a while. (If it is early in the year or it has been raining you may want to stay onto the fire road as the singletrack across the meadow can get quite boggy.) The single track will roll through some woods for a while and then roll back onto the meadow and cut across it. Once you are across the meadow you will intersect with a fire road that goes up to a horse staging area. The singletrack continues off to the left somewhere but take the fire road and head off to your right (and slightly uphill) There is a gate that you will have to go through (make sure to close it behind you). You will now be at a T-junction with another fire road.

You now have to ask yourself something, Do you feel like a badass? You can either go to the left and downhill and catch the Cannell trail when it crosses the fire road and then go up a brutal section of single track that will be hard to ride on anybody's good day or you can hang a right and climb the

fire road up the hill and intersect with Cannell trail after the brutal singletrack uphill section. I highly recommend the fire road climb by going the right. We went to the left and hooked up with the uphill singletrack. It was quite brutal indeed and a real calf burner. Once we slugged our way up the climb the trail we then followed along the fire road for some ways downhill until it crosses the fire road.

From here we took the singletrack off the right and started climbing again. The climb is only about 1/2 mile long but you gain a couple hundred feet and there are a few steep spots coupled with a few tough rocks to navigate. You peak out at 8,400 feet and then you are rewarded with a 1.5 mile rocky technical singletrack descent of into Cannell Meadow. When you get into the meadow the singletrack rolls out onto a fire road. Follow the fire road and look for another fire road off to the south. Right around here look for the singletrack heading off to the left just after that fire road. For the next 2.5 miles you will meander in and out of the meadow as you work your way south. Near the south end of the Meadow there is nice rock formation to play around on.

The south end of the meadow gives way to somewhat narrow canyon that Cannell Meadow creek runs through. This canyon has some technical sections that will require some slow speed skills as you have some tight spots to weave and squeeze through. After this technical section you will come out to Pine Flats on a fire road. Pick up the trail to your left and continue on. There is a barbed wire fenced gate shortly after the trail starts to turn slightly downhill. Make sure to put the gate back up behind you.

This gate marks the beginning of the plunge. The plunge is around 8 miles long and it drops 5,000 feet. The trail is for the most part pretty buff with a few technical patches here and there. Right after the gate you will not be on the pedals much as you just lay off the brakes and start screaming. Shortly after you start on the plunge you will come around a turn and WOW! You will have an incredibly amazing vista of Lake Isabella far below. From here it is an absolute bomb fest that just keeps going and going and going. As awesome as the trail is it is worth it to stop occasionally just to take in the views. There is only one short steep rise in the trail about of 1/3rd of the way down. After that the trail gets looser and you will have some switchbacks that can trip you up if not proficient with navigating them. Either way it will still be a bombfest if you are so inclined.

The bottom of the trail comes out at a fire road. Bear left and go up to gate. Once through the gate you will see a singletrack heading down through the meadow. Follow this and it will take you out to Mountain Road 99. Hang a left and down about 3/4th of a mile or so back into town. All told this about a 32 mile ride with 1,900 feet of climbing and 9,000 wonderful feet of falling out of heaven.

After three years of missing chances to do this ride, I finally made it back and I was not disappointed. This was a fairly early in the season for this area and there were some remnants of snow here and there at the higher elevations. We opted to do the Sherman Peak out-and-back and it was well worth it. We are pretty sure we were the first mountain bikers to go to the peak this year as we were making the first discernable tracks in both dirt and snow. There was quite a bit of deadfall on the trail up to the peak and we cleared four trees out of the way and bits of others. There are at least four other big trees still across the trail that will take more than the saws in our packs to get through.

The trail from the peak back down to the pass is the most technical stuff you will do on the entire ride and we took care to fully enjoy it. Once back down to the pass we started down the Cannell trail and it was quickly obvious that the moto-types had chewed up the trail a bit. It was still a hoot but a bit of a bummer to see such an awesome trail with quite unnecessary damage.

The further down the trail the we went the less beat up the trail was. Big Meadow always has a mushy spot in the middle and since this was early in the season we opted to bypass the singletrack that cuts across the meadow and stick to the fire road that goes around it and up towards Cannell Peak, where it rejoins the singletrack. The Motos are not allowed on the trail beyond Big Meadows and things got back to the conditions I remembered. This was a great ride and I am pretty sure I will not wait three years for my next visit here. In addition to the pictures I took, I also shot another

video.

The weather in the Kern River Valley is typically mild in our Spring, Fall and Winter seasons lending the area toward some incredible mountain biking, nearly year-round. If you are interested in riding cross-country trails, some single-track or serious downhill, our community has the trail ride you want. Our local trails can challenge the most experienced riders, while other trails make newbies wonder why they've never tried this sport. Because we don't want you to miss out on any of our spectacular riding opportunities, we offer vehicle shuttles to two major biking areas in the Kern River Valley.

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