

# The Bigfoot Bicycle Club

...promoting road, mountain, and family cycling



## Butler Valley Loop

The Butler Valley Loop is a favorite among area cyclists because of its challenging climbs, beautiful scenery, and limited car traffic. There are several historic points of interest to visit during the ride. The ride is not for the beginner. It is about 50 miles in length and has two difficult climbs. The weather can be variable as you ride from sea level at the coast to just over 2000 feet inland. It is often 10 or more degrees warmer inland than at the coast. In contrast, it could be beautiful on the coast and socked in with fog or drizzle up in the mountains. So be prepared for all weather conditions by carrying extra clothes such as arm warmers, a vest, or a rain jacket, especially during the winter. During the summer bring plenty of water because temperatures can reach over 90 degrees inland. It is a loop so once you are committed to the ride there are no real short cuts home. The road conditions are variable and include short sections of gravel and rough roads with potholes. Be sure to bring a spare tube, patches, and tools. Most cyclists ride their standard road bikes with 23-mm racing tires and do just fine. The ride should take between 4 or 5 hours depending on your fitness and how often you stop for breaks. The following mile points are based on one bicycle computer so pay more attention to the landmarks.

## Detailed Route

Mile Point 0- Start in Arcata at the Jacoby Building, California Historic Landmark No. 783. This is located in the Arcata Plaza at Eighth and H Streets. Head north on G Street; it's a one way. You will pass four bike shops as you leave town. This is a good time to stock up on supplies. As you head up G Street you will pass the following: Outdoor Store at 876 G Street, Adventure's Edge at 650 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Revolution Bicycle Repair at 1360 G Street, and Life Cycle at 1593 G. After you pass Life Cycle you will want to follow the signs towards Humboldt State University and Sunset Ave. by keeping to the right.

Mile Point 0.8- At the stop sign at Sunset Avenue turn right and then left on to L. K. Wood Blvd. Follow the bicycle lane north on L. K. Wood Blvd.

Mile Point 1.4- Bear left over Highway 101 on the St. Louis Overpass.

Side trip: To visit Camp Curtis, California Historic Landmark No. 215, go straight a short distance on L. K. Wood before going over the highway. The marker is at the end of the road. The monument is the only evidence that this was a historic military camp.

Mile Point 1.5- Turn right onto St. Louis Road.

Mile Point 1.7- Turn right onto West End Road at the roundabout. You'll follow a nice smooth road and bicycle lane as you head through Arcata's industrial section of town.

Mile Point 2.8- Go straight at the intersection to Giuntoli Ln, staying on West End Road. Here is where you leave the comforts of a bike lane.

Mile Point 3.3- Cross the railroad tracks. The road narrows here and becomes more rolling in nature. Traffic will begin to lighten up also. You will start to enjoy the scenery of the country as you travel through the picturesque Warren Creek Valley. The road surface is in good condition.

Mile Point 9- Turn left onto Hatchery Road and head north towards Blue Lake. In less than a mile you will pass over the Mad River.

Side trip: The Mad River Hatchery is located about a mile down the road if you turn right on Hatchery Road. The hatchery is open to the public and has a small picnic area as well as several ponds of young salmon. There is a restroom at the far end of the parking lot.

Mile Point 10- As you come into Blue Lake bear left towards the Blue Lake Museum. Note: local riders will want to bear right on H Street towards "The Famous Logger Bar." About 100 feet west of the museum on Railroad Avenue is Arcata and Mad River Rail Road Company, California Historic Landmark No. 842. To continue the ride, head east on Railroad Ave. from the museum towards "The Famous Logger Bar." Continue east on Railroad Ave. to the next road point.

Mile Point 10.9- Turn right onto Blue Lake Blvd. You will start to notice a lot of log and lumber truck traffic as you head towards Korbel.

Mile Point 12.2- Korbel Post Office. You are in the historic milling town of Korbel owned by the Simpson Timber Company. Follow the road over the historic Blue Lake Bridge, dated 1928. After crossing the bridge you will begin the first of two big climbs of the day. This is a good point to shed some clothes. You will climb an average 8% grade for approximately 2.6 miles and gain about 1100 feet in elevation. A triple crank or large rear gears are recommended for all but the really fit rider.

Mile Point 13.2- The Old Arrow Tree, California Historic Landmark No. 164.

Mile Point 14.9- You are at the top of the climb at the intersection of Bald Mountain Road and Maple Creek Road. Once you start descending into Canon Creek, you may as well do the whole loop. If you turn back now you will have about a 30-mile out-and-back. Turn right onto Maple Creek Road. After a couple miles you start the bone jarring descent to Canon Creek. Use caution on this descent because there are a lot of curves and potholes on the way down.

Mile Point 18.3- Canon Creek Bridge. You will start a short climb out of the creek. This is where you will encounter the first gravel section of road. Ride cautiously for



the next 7 miles because there are several short sections of gravel road. You don't want to be going 30 miles an hour into a curve and suddenly hit gravel.

This is a good time to enjoy the scenery and keep your eyes out for wildlife. This section of the ride offers the most solitude and there is very little traffic. The road is narrow and rolling with a few short ascents and descents.

Mile Point 26- Turn right onto Butler Valley Road. You will come to this intersection on a fairly fast descent which makes it easy to miss.

Mile Point 26.8- Mad River bridge stop.

This is a beautiful bridge overlooking the Mad River. There are very few cyclists that can ride by without stopping to check out the view. This is a great place to eat some food and stretch your legs. There is a popular swimming hole just below the bridge. Don't bother bringing your fishing pole. This area is off limits to fishing. As you leave the bridge



you will have a short climb up to Butler Valley and the start of the longest climb of the day. From the bridge to the top of the climb, you will ascend 1660 feet in 7.8 miles. This climb is not as steep as the Korbel climb.

Mile Point 32.9- Fickle Hill intersection. Fickle Hill Road is a shorter way back to Arcata, but the road has more gravel sections. Continue up Butler Valley Road past this intersection.

Mile Point 34.7- This is the top of the climb. Turn right on Kneeland Road towards Eureka.

Mile Point 36.4- Pass Kneeland Post Office.

Mile Point 36.75- Greenwood Heights Road. Stay on Kneeland Road bearing to the left. Greenwood Heights is an alternative way down to Three Corners. It is approximately the same distance. The descent is more variable in slope and includes some steep descents, flat sections, and one short climb. The Kneeland descent is more gradual and steady. You can easily go over 40 miles per hour on parts of the descent.

Mile Point 41- Freshwater Park. This is a great picnic spot with restrooms. The creek is dammed in the summer to create a swimming pool. As you continue past the park you will pass through the community of Freshwater.

Mile Point 44- Three Corners. Turn right on Myrtle Avenue. This is by far the busiest section of road. The road is narrow and has no shoulder. This is an especially busy road during the morning and evening commute.

Mile Point 45.8- Go straight past the Indianola Cutoff.

Mile Point 47.7- Go straight past the Bayside Cutoff. The road gets better and there is a wider shoulder.

Mile Point 50.2- Go straight over the 101 overpass.

Mile Point 50.7- Turn right onto G Street and continue north until you reach the Arcata Plaza.

Mile Point 50.9- Arcata Plaza. You are done.

### **Just the Basics**

Mile Point 0- Start in Arcata at the Arcata Plaza. Go straight up G Street. After passing Life Cycle bear to the right towards Humboldt State University.

Mile Point 0.8- At Sunset Avenue turn right and then turn left on to L. K. Wood Blvd.

Mile Point 1.4- Bear left over Highway 101 and then right on St. Louis Road.

Mile Point 1.7- Turn right onto West End Road.

Mile Point 9- Turn left onto Hatchery Road.

Mile Point 10- Turn right on Railroad Ave. at "The Famous Logger Bar."

Mile Point 10.9- Turn right onto Blue Lake Blvd.

Mile Point 14.9- Turn right onto Maple Creek Road.

Mile Point 26- Turn right onto Butler Valley Road.

Mile Point 34.7- Turn right on Kneeland Road towards Eureka.

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Mile Point 50.2- Go straight over the 101 overpass.

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Mile Point 50.9- Arcata Plaza. You are done.

By Jim Robbins, Bigfoot Bicycle Club