

# Cycling in Borrego Springs [BS] Training Routes

Created by Joe Cussen [October 2013]

All routes begin and end at Christmas Circle. All route distances and grades are a rough estimates only.

- 1) Montezuma Valley Rd [S22]: go up Palm Canyon Drive about 1 mile and left onto Montezuma. The climb is 11 miles, averaging 6.5% with pitches at 8%+. 1 mile over the top is Ranchita where you can get drinks and snacks.
- 2) Options from the top of Montezuma continuing onto the intersection of S22 and S2 [5 miles from Ranchita]
  - a. Turn right on S2, go 6 miles to the intersection of S79, go left on S79 for 4 miles, turn right on S76 [direction of Lake Henshaw] for about 4 miles and turn right on East Palomar Rd. The climb is 11 miles averaging about 5.5% [used in the 2013 Tour of CA]. The descent on East Palomar requires some "caution" as the road is in poor condition. An alternative is to descend the south side, which is a much better road. At the bottom turn left onto S76 and it is 9 miles back to the beginning of East Palomar Rd [S76 in this direction has some shoulder areas]. You can get drinks and snack at Lake Henshaw. Overall distance is over 100 miles.
    - i. From Lake Henshaw you can return the way you came or take a right about 1.5 miles further on onto Mesa Grande – this is the steep direction [2013 Tour of CA came the opposite direction]. Continue over the top and descend until it intersects with S79. Turn left and head back to BS. [this adds about 20 miles]
  - b. Turn left on S2 and continue about 12 miles until it intersects with S78
    - i. "Around the block route" – turn left on S78 continuing until the turn-off at Yaqui Pass for BS [distance is about 50 miles]. You can do this loop in the reverse direction going over Yaqui Pass, right onto S78, then right onto S2, then right onto S22 and down Montezuma Grade. There are about 30 climbing miles in this direction.

- ii. Same as above but continue on S78, direction Ocotillo Wells, another 9 miles and turn left on Borrego Springs Rd [this section is also referred to as the Texas Dip] and back to BS.
    - c. At the intersection with S2 and S78, turn right in the direction of Julian
      - i. Julian is about 10 miles with one grade [about 0.5 miles at 8%+] and then the Banner Grade [6 miles at about 5.5%] into Julian.
      - ii. Go about 0.3 miles and turn left back onto S2 direction Aqua Caliente – hot spring area 20 miles away. There is one good climb [about 2 miles at 7%]. This is an out and back loop returning to S78, turning right and back toward BS. You can get drinks and snacks at Aqua Caliente.
- 3) Direction Julian by way of Yaqui Pass. Go out Borrego Springs Rd about 6 miles turn right onto Yaqui Pass. Yaqui pass from BS side is 5 miles at about 5%. The backside is 1.5 miles with the center section having grades about 8-8.5%. The backside is good place to do training interval repeats [excellent road, very little traffic]. Turn right onto S78 to Julian [see info above]. In Julian there are several options:
- a. Return the way you came – enjoy a lunch break in Julian.
  - b. Turn left onto S79 and travel about 6 miles and go left onto Sunrise Hwy – scenic but relative easy 14-mile climb to the top of Mt Laguna.
    - i. Return the way you came.
    - ii. Continue on down to Pine Valley [11 miles easy descent]. You can turn around there and return the way you came or continue on about 2 miles and turn right onto S79 – easy uphill grade back to Julian, about 26 miles.
    - iii. You can get drinks and snacks at Mt Laguna, Pine Valley and Lake Cuyamaca.
  - c. Continue on S78 down to Santa Ysabel [about 8 miles] and turn right onto S79.
    - i. Follow S79 back to BS – see info above
    - ii. On S79 turn left onto Mesa Grande and follow this road over to S76 – see info above

- 4) Time trial route: S22 direction of Salton Sea. This is rolling terrain out to the “towers” about 20 miles and then return same way. We strongly recommend not continuing onto Salton Sea, as the road surface is very poor beyond the towers and not suitable for bicycles.
- 5) Scenic BS tour – see all the animal statues. Take S22 direction Salton Sea and take the first main left, De Giorgio Rd [about 0.6 miles]. Turn left onto Big Horn Rd for about 0.3 miles; turn right onto Borrego Springs Rd for about 2.5 miles; turn left into Indian Head and make the loop. There are animal statues throughout beginning at the intersection of De Giorgio and Big Horn. There is another animal statue section about 3 miles on Borrego Springs Rd in the direction of Yaqui Pass.
- 6) If there is poor weather up in the mountains [snow, wind, rain] a ride option is the reverse Salton Sea loop. Go out Borrego Springs Rd to S78; turn left and travel [past Ocotillo] out to S86 and turn left. S86 is a main divided highway with fast moving traffic, but there is a wide shoulder area. Travel to Salton City and turn left on S22 [you can get drinks and snacks at the ARCO station]. The first 3 – 4 miles has a poor road surface but riding in this direction for experienced cyclists is not a factor. You cross into San Diego Cty by the “towers” mentioned above for the time trial training route. [overall distance is about 75 miles].

Roadway comments:

- 1) S78 and S79 [on the Julian side] have quite a lot of traffic, especially on weekends [Ocotillo is the main off-road vehicle recreation area]. Locals prefer to travel on those roads Tuesday through Thursday. Both roads have very good road surfaces but there are essentially no shoulders. Groups should ride single file and allow spacing between riders so passing vehicles can pull back in if a vehicle comes from the opposite direction.
- 2) S76 in the area of Lake Henshaw and Palomar has a good road surface but little or no shoulder areas. There is moderate traffic
- 3) S79 from Santa Ysabel has quite a lot of traffic. The road surface is very good but little shoulder areas; however there is good visibility for all.
- 4) Montezuma Valley Rd surface is very good. The descent is mostly non-technical except for lower section from mile marker 11.5

down where there are some blind curves. On blind curves, stay to the right of the centerline as RVs or trucks coming up tend to crowd the centerline on these curves.

- 5) Winds generally pickup in the afternoon.
- 6) The Chamber of commerce has an excellent free BS area map.
- 7) Elite pros [such as Chris Horner] riding from the San Diego area use many of these roads.