

## **Las Vegas Valley Bike Club goes to Mammoth Lakes, California by Linda Kraus**

After moving here last November 2004, I decided that in order to feel part of the community, I must do what I knew best and that was to join the local bike club. I marked my calendar for the holiday party hosted by the Las Vegas Valley Bike Club. A dear friend from Southern NJ who was a fellow cyclist and triathlete who died of lung cancer in early December weighed heavily in my heart and it took all I had to get dressed, print out mapquest.com directions to the Spaghetti Factory and attend the Las Vegas Valley Bike Club holiday party.

I had the good fortune of sitting next to LVVBC members Patti and Terry Allen. Terry told me that he was organizing a bike trip in Mammoth Lakes, California in conjunction with Mammoth's Bluesapalooza brews and blues festival in August 2005 and suggested that if I wanted to go that I better book my room early. You don't need to twist my arm to convince me to go biking and I jumped at the chance to join my new bike club on a trip to Mammoth Lakes, California. I even recruited 3 of my Southern New Jersey sea level friends along for the journey.

About 20 Las Vegas Valley Bike Club members and 3 Shore Cycle Club NJ members drove 5+ hours from Las Vegas to Mammoth Lakes, Ca. We commandeered the Austria Hof Hotel for the weekend. Several of us were assigned rooms on the third floor that could only be accessed by a set of winding steps. So we lugged our precious road bikes up and down the stairs a few times that weekend. It took me one stair scramble like this to realize that the bike is lighter if I empty the 2 water bottles first! I guess the hotel figured that the people from NJ needed more altitude training before the ride!

Terry had 2 route raps planned that Friday evening: one early and one around 9:30pm in order to accommodate some of us late comers to the hotel. The hotel had a bar and restaurant in the basement which was a good place to hold meetings over a brew. We had the option of riding one of 3 different road rides and were offered cue sheets for each distance.

1. shuttle from Mammoth to Highway 395 and the south end of the June lake loop and ride North on Highway 395 to the North end of the loop and ride the scenic June Lake loop for about 21 miles
2. Bike from Mammoth via the Mammoth scenic loop and Highway 395 and around June Lake for about 38 miles and shuttle back to Mammoth
3. Bike from Mammoth via the Mammoth scenic loop and Highway 395, around the June Lake scenic loop and back to Mammoth along Highway 395 bypassing the scenic loop and up Route 203 back to the Austrai Hof for 58 miles

On Saturday morning, Terry's plans to have his trailer readied to shuttle those riders to do the shorter June Lake loop option were foiled by a bear who was rummaging in the open dumpster in the underground parking garage where his car and trailer were located at the condominium complex next door. A fellow club member drove Terry into the garage which prompted the big bear to scurry out and head for the hills. After a few group pictures, we cycled down the hill, up the hill, and onto the scenic road in Mammoth heading East toward highway 395.

My husband, Fred having been a hippie way back in the 1970's recalled highway 395 as the most scenic road he had ever been on in his travels across the country and was anxious to actually bike on it and take in the scenery at a slower pace than from behind the wheel of a speeding car. We cycled North on highway 395 with the Sierra Nevada Mountains as our backdrop. We left the highway after about 23 miles from the start, after taking a view of Mono Lake about 4 miles to the North at Lee Vining and turned left onto the North June Lake Loop and cycled around the loop on rolling hills that became quite steep in some sections. Terry suggested that we stop at The Tiger Cafe in the town of June Lake for breakfast before either shuttling back to Mammoth or continuing on for the 58 mile trek. He had a well-equipped trailer complete with gizmos to attach the front forks of the bike sans front wheel for those riders who opted to shuttle from The Tiger Cafe. Some of us opted to ride the whole enchilada for a total 58 miles with the last 5 miles uphill into Mammoth from Highway 395 and with the last mile to the Austria Hof at the base of a ski lift the steepest of all!

Our long riding day was rewarded with the Bluesapalooza festival only a few miles from our hotel. Our concert tickets came with a nicely engraved Mammoth Lakes beer glass, 4 food coupons worth \$1 each and all the micobrews you cared to sample. I think there were over 50 micro breweries present. Each micobrewery had its own stand complete with colorful banners and props like edible barley and bits of wheat to sample along with the beer. Some beers claimed that they had coffee flavoring, others were organic, some were light and others were dark in color like rootbeer. We sampled and settled on the Two Rivers Cider which the Two River folks say was not actually beer at all. I'm not even sure if it was alcoholic but it was GOOD! The cider came in apple or pomegranate flavors and can only be purchased now in Sacramento and other parts of California as it is a new company. Go to [www.tworiverscider.com](http://www.tworiverscider.com) for more information on this cider company. We purchased fresh popped kettle corn which has a salty sweet flavor to go along with our cider. Other food options were chicken tacos, chocolate covered cheesecake on a stick, and huge Flintstone-sized turkey legs. After a few beers, we dared one another to take a big chomping bite out of anyones turkey leg as innocent people marched by with the huge legs on styrofoam paper plates. We restrained ourselves though and stayed with the kettle corn. There were a number of bands that played that day including one rock band that someone described as having "possessed" or "evil" band members. The person suggested I go up to the bandstand to have a look for myself, which I did out of curiosity. The band members seemed oblivious that there was even an audience out there and played loud and raucous while strumming along in their instruments. They wore leather-looking cowboy hats that looked sinister with the brims down low over their eyes and long, black waggly hair. I thought this was supposed to be blues? Anyway, it was entertaining all the same.

If you want to do some high altitude bike riding, see the Sierra Nevadas, burn enough calories to eat a big breakfast at The Tiger Cafe, eat kettle corn, watch turkey legs strut by, drink all the micobrew you care to sample and listen to the live bands from from 12 noon until 9:30pm, pay attention to the newsletter issue where Terry Allen organizes another fantastic bike event to Mammoth Lakes, California in 2006! Terry, next year we'll make sure we bring the bear pepper spray for you too! Thanks for organizing a great trip!