

My First Double Century

Short Version:

1. I completed my first double century The [Hemet Double](#) on 8 Apr 06.
2. The Hemet double consists of two loops centered on the Motel 6 in Hemet. The first loop is 107 miles and the second 95.
3. Stats:
 - a. Altitude Gains:
 - i. First Loop: Advertised: 2700 ft, Delorme's Topo 5.0: 4000 ft, Actual (GPS Plot): 3500 ft
 - ii. Second Loop: Advertised: 2200 ft, Delorme's Topo 5.0: Actual (GPS Plot): 3900 ft.
 - b. Time: 16 hours and 53 min from start to finish:
 - i. First Loop (107 miles): Pedaling Time: 7:05 (6:37 for 100 miles); Rest Stops: 33; Other: 24 min (stop lights, etc.)
 - ii. Second Loop (95): Pedaling Time: 7:22 Rest Stops: 41 min Other: 67 min
4. Started at 4:08 am and finished at 9:01 pm. My total time put me ahead of about 12 other riders out of about 145 finishers.
5. "Official" results are posted at <http://www.inlandempirecycling.com/HemetDC/>
6. After getting off bike at the end, I felt faint and could not stand up for more than a couple minutes...low blood pressure due to dehydration. In hospital for 9 hours getting 4 liters of fluid via IV.

Long Version:

Long ago I decided that I could never race bicycles, so I set my goals on going farther rather than faster. I have done centuries, double metrics and even a 140 mile ride. So it was time to take the next step and go for a double century. Climbing has never been my strong point so last year I looked for a flat double century. The [Hemet Double](#) was suggested as one of the flattest doubles so that became my goal for 2006.

My preparation plan at first seemed obvious: Ride lots of miles. While not immediately obvious, there is a lot more to ultra-distance riding than sitting and pedaling for long periods of time. I'll discuss this latter. For miles, I took part in as many [NUBS](#) events as possible and did at least one century a month during the first three months of 2006. Additionally, I added extra miles on weekend club rides whenever possible. All this resulted in over 2,000 miles for the year before the Hemet Century on April 8th.

However, I learned there is a lot more to ultra cycling than just miles. All the minor issues in normal cycling become major problems in ultra-cycling. One must have a plan for nutrition, hydration, weather, cold, heat and, probably most important, attitude. There are probably many more. Here is how I prepared for some of these other issues.

- a. Nutrition: I understood the importance of nutrition. I used straight [maltodextrin](#) in my water bottles for liquid nutrition and also carried gels and power bars. I tried not to rely on rest stops except for water.
- b. Hydration: I knew this was critical and had an extra water bottle cage on my bike. It has always been my procedure to always drink a complete water bottle at each rest stop in addition to drinking on the bike. It is also important to confirm hydration levels by having frequent restroom breaks.
- c. Weather and Temperature: Luckily, for a single day's ride in Southern California, these were not an issue. My body sock also helped provide shelter from both the morning chill and the afternoon sun.
- d. Attitude: Now here is a big one! Several months before the double, I asked our GVC NUB'ers, Scott and Erik, for some advice. Erik said in response to my concern about ankle and hip pain "Don't put a ton of pressure on them by grinding the hell out of them by going super-fast etc., the accumulation of the pressure and the time involved will stress the joints." Well, this proved to be great advice for a number of reasons.
 - 1) It was helpful to save my joints. I normally always ride hard enough to stress everything in hopes of being stronger for the next ride. Backing off just a little was a big help.
 - 2) But, why am I discussing joints, under the topic of "attitude." Well, as I backed off to save my joints, I found I had a "perceived" effort of almost zero. That is, as I had no strain on my muscles and joints, I had less strain on my lungs and heart. At any one time, I felt I could ride forever as I perceived zero effort. If I ever felt any effort, I shifted down a gear. At the same time, this prevented my mind from always casting doubts on my ability to finish. With no perceived effort, it was always "this is easy, I can go on forever." This was critical to maintaining a positive attitude.
 - 3) My "double" was to be about me against me or me against the course. It was not a race and time was not an issue. Nor was it about impressing others...there would be no chasing down other riders or any similar actions. The goal was to finish and nothing else. Anything else would interfere with that goal.
- e. After a recent seat adjustment, I developed a chaffing problem that I had not experienced before. I worked hard to resolve this before the ride. I bought some ankle braces to ride with to help support my ankle. I was sure to use those in shorter training rides to resolve any pressure or chaffing issues they may cause.

In summary, I felt pretty good about all my preparation before heading down to Hemet on Friday, April 7th.

I got checked in at my motel in time for a good meal and to prepare my bike for the next day. I had my clothes laid out so there would be no delay looking for my warmers, socks or whatever. Nor would I toss and turn when sleeping wondering if I remembered everything. Breakfast would not be available at that hour, so I had bagels and yogurt ready to eat. As I was checking out that morning, I had all my bags packed and ready to take to my car. I arranged for a 3:30 am wake and a backup just in case...I wanted no delays and no stress. Everything worked great. I tried to get to sleep by 7:30 for my 3:30am get up. I suspect it was 9 to 9:30 before I was out for the night.

The ride was hosted out of a Motel 6 about a half mile from my motel. I arrived there about 4:05 and saw a number of riders heading out. I was surprised at this. There was not a mass start planned; but the start time was really at 6am. They allowed early starting for those that needed more time. I thought I would be the only one needing more time! I checked in (while not a race, they tracked everyone's time and progress...a good idea I feel) and was pedaling at 4:08. Almost immediately, I noticed two things: 1. I was catching the other riders. Not good, I thought. Am I trying too hard? Am I caught up in the excitement? A quick check of my heart rate monitor and speed and "perceived" effort confirmed I was OK...maybe they started early because they were slow!! 2. It was flat. I mean flat. In the first 10 miles, I probably did less climbing than I have ever done over any 10 mile stretch in three years. Wow, I could get used to this...flat is nice...I wonder what it is like to ride in Florida. After ride analysis showed the first 10 miles was not really flat...there was a 100 ft altitude loss!!!

I continued along in the dark enjoying life saving some battery life for the evening by following others and using my two 3xAAA battery lights rather than my HID. I talked with another rider named Bobbie, who said she was on her 40th double! We had passed her friend who was fixing a flat in the dark and she explained on a recent double she had to fix two flats towards the end of the ride in the dark and in the rain. That is something I will have to practice later...much later. After 23 miles, I pulled into the first rest stop at a local gas station to find about 10 riders wondering where the rest stop volunteers were and a long line at the gas station rest room. This was also the light drop off station and I really didn't cherish the idea of carrying my 5lb battery the 178 remaining miles. As I finished my business and was about to leave, a van pulled in and started setting up the rest stop. I gave them my battery, registration number and was off. I didn't need any water or food as the morning was still cool. The sun would be up in 30 minutes for so and I was in a nice residential area with street lights, so no HID was not a problem.

Nothing special happened as I continued to rest stop #2 at 53 miles. Although I had plotted the course several times at home, I didn't realize what the country side would be like. I turned out to be typical southern California terrain. The route went through a lot of urban areas and nice country farm land. While the route seemed to have some nice long legs, I discovered they contained lots of stop lights and stop signs, so there was a lot of starting and stopping...not good for the legs; but I didn't notice...remember...no perceived effort. Approaching 33 miles, I was ready for the only big descent...about an 800-900 foot drop. I had my usual fun and got up to 45 mph; however, I kept to my plan and did not press it...I could have gone faster and passed a few more riders. I mainly coasted and slow pedaled to keep my legs loose. Rest stop #2 was in the parking lot of Tom's Farm; a restaurant, store complex for tourists. I drink a lot of water, ate and packed away some food for later and hit the road.

Dumb, dumb, dumb...that is all I can say about what happened next. Before, I get into this; let me say I noticed the importance of being able to navigate off of a route slip. A two hundred mile course is too long to have volunteers on each corner or arrows on road. Riders were spread out enough that you could not plan on following the pack. Many times, I was on my own and had to follow the route slip. Now, I enjoy navigating so this was not a big deal. OK, on to the "el dummy" moment. Three miles after leaving the rest stop, I realized that I did not flip over my route slip. One bad thing about a recumbent is you can't ride no-handed for short period when two hands are needed. I was steering with my right hand at the same time as I used a couple fingers of my right hand to help my left hand re-clip my route slip in place. Who knows what happened; but BAM! I am on my left side in middle of the road. I was not going very fast, so no road rash. However, my hip hit hard and was sore. My chest muscles also hurt as my arm was pressed hard into my chest as I hit. I refused to admit to or concede any pain, so I got up and was off within a

couple minutes with my route slip in place. Could I have waited until the next stop light or pulled off to the side of the road for minute? Of course, but why waste 30 seconds of a ride of over 57,000 seconds. Can you say “Dumb, dumb, dumb?”

Things continued without excitement; but I now had to climb back up to about 1500 ft over the next 10 miles or so after that big 800-900 foot descent. (I know, most of you do not consider that a climb) No problem, I continued through rest stops 3 and 4 and arrived back at the Motel 6 about noon. The route was basically a figure 8 with two 100 miles loops ([Loop 1](#) and [Loop 2](#)) and the Hemet Motel 6 at the center. The first loop was 107 miles and the second 95 miles. I finished the first century (100 miles) with 6:37 of pedaling and over an hour stopped. My goal was seven hours of pedaling and one hour at the rest stops. My stopped time was a lot higher due to the stop lights and lack of porta-potties...in fact, there were none. (There was only the gas station restroom or whatever was available at the rest stop. This added 5-10 minutes at each stop. Later, I would smarten up and pull into a McDonalds prior to the rest stop.) It was not until 12:30 that I was off on my second century.

The second loop was to only have 2200 feet of climbing with 1200 of that in the first 13 miles. Well, I got to almost 7 miles out and still had not climbed very much. Then it hit, what a steep climb...definitely the steepest that I have ever climbed. I am used to climbing slow and failing way behind road bikes during climbs; but surprisingly this was not the case here. I was climbing at maybe 3.5 mph and they were struggling at maybe 4 mph...certainly not pulling away. I was happy to finish the climb (later GPS analysis showed as much as 14% grade in places) and get started on the rest of the loop that should be fairly flat. It was a pretty route with rest stop #5 at a vineyard; but again you had to ride almost a quarter mile to use the single restroom behind the barn. I only made one wrong turn. Near Temecula, the street signs were small and with a somewhat “artsy-fartsy” lettering and I misread a street name. I went less than a mile out of the way. Later, I went through downtown Temecula. There was approximately a one mile section that went along the main tourist area. Bumper to bumper traffic and narrow streets might be good for a social ride but not for a double century. I found myself getting a bit irritated at the route; but quickly realized this may be a symptom of bonking and ate and drank something to cheer up.

Along about 150 miles, I would have been happy to stop and call it a nice long ride and a good training ride. But, I had to keep my good attitude and press on for a short 50 miles ride...or so I kept telling myself. “Remember,” I told myself, “you can do 50 miles with no perceived effort.” Believing your own lies must be a symptom of something!!! At rest stop #6, I was tired, sat awhile and drank a V-8 to make sure I was getting plenty of salt. I saw several bike light bags and checked to see if mine had been dropped off...they had not. Continuing my complaint about rest rooms, this rest stop was in a church parking lot. We had use the church rest room at the same time nicely dressed folks were showing up for an Easter music show.

I was off and rolled into rest stop #7. The route just prior to this stop and continuing to the end was the same as loop #1, so it was nice to be on familiar roads and know what was ahead. I knew it would soon be a very flat route. This rest stop was the same as rest stop #3 and I happened to stand in line for the rest room behind the same person I did about 14 hours prior. Some riders draft off the same people for long periods of time...I just meet them at the restrooms! I checked on my lights at this stop and they were not there. I had two tail-lights and two small back-up headlights that were good enough to see the white fog line, so I continued on. It was soon dark and the temperature was dropping. Whenever possible, I followed other riders to borrow some of their light. With about 15 miles to go, everything was hurting and

there was no more “no perceived effort.” The under-side of my right knee was hurting with every pedal stroke, my ankles were hurting, my hip where I fell earlier was hurting and I was tired. I prayed that the Motel 6 at the finish line would have a room. I had not made a reservation as if I finished early or did not finish for some reason I was going to drive to Thousand Oaks. Finally, I made the turn onto the last 6 mile stretch. Unfortunately, it was into a 10 mph headwind and the road was in terrible condition. Another rider offered to lead me through the pot hole laden street with his lights. It helped; but it was still bone jarring. Finally about five of us rolled into the Motel 6 at 9pm.

Now this is not the end of the story.

I checked in with the time keeper and slowly walked a few feet to lobby where I would beg for a room. I passed up a chance to eat with the 20-30 riders enjoying a meal and ride stories. I even passed up the restroom. Those could come later. I wanted a room and a bed!! When the clerk said she had a room and even a first floor room I was a happy rider. However, as put my credit card and driver license on the counter for her, I also put my head on the counter...I was not feeling good. Soon that was not good enough and I left the counter to sit in the lobby while she processed the paperwork. She kindly bought it to me for my signatures...she knew I was suffering. Within a minute, I could not sit and dropped to the lobby floor. Ok, they knew what all the riders had just done and were used to seeing a little suffering; but they were now getting seriously concerned about me and called a few ride organizers. “I’ll just need a minute,” “I think I’ll be OK” and “Give me just a minute” were typical responses to the many questions I was getting. One tried to give me some bread thinking I was bonking. Another tried some Dr. Pepper. Soon my head was in a waste basket trying, but failing, to throw-up. One gave me a math problem that I solved correctly...this confirmed I had not bonked. I kept thinking, “I was on the bike 5 minutes ago. How could this be happening?” The motel manager had seen enough and called 911. By the time the fire department and ambulance arrived, I was feeling better. My blood pressure was 140/70 as I lay on the floor. So, I moved to sit up on a chair. My blood pressure dropped immediately to 98/70 and I was soon back on the floor. The head paramedic strongly suggested a trip to the hospital for some fluids. I had to agree. I had to laugh and joke with the paramedics over their questions. “Have you been sweating much lately...Well, I just rode my bike 202 miles.” “Do you have any pain... Well, I just rode my bike 202 miles. Do you mean other than my hip, ankles, knees, butt and back?” “Have you been breathing heavy...Well, I just rode my bike 202 miles.” We both knew they had to ask the questions. The organizers agreed to put my bike...still sitting outside with lights flashing waiting for me...in my room. “My room,” I thought, “do I really need a room if I am spending the night in a hospital.” Oh well, I was not in a position to organize a better solution. “Oh nuts,” I thought as we drove away in the ambulance, “my cell phone is still on my bike. I really should check in with my wife waiting for a phone call back in Las Vegas.”

For the next nine hours I was on a bed in the hallway at the emergency room. I received 4 liters of IV fluids and a turkey sandwich. I was released about 5:30am and took a taxi back to the Motel 6, got an hour extension to my check out time, learned my bike was in the pool boiler room and went to bed. I still had the problem of my lights. With all the post-ride activity, I was not able to ask if my lights were at the finish. Well, now, my priority was sleep. My 11am wake-up call, five hours later, got me moving for home. I got my bike, loaded it on my car, called the organizer to check on my lights...he had them, checked out and headed out for a big breakfast...my first, post-ride meal. I met up with [Dr. Jim Watrous](#) in Riverside to pick up the lights. Jim is a very interesting person. He is an 87 year old, PhD and teaches Bio-Physics and many southern California universities. He is also dedicated to cycling and especially

ultra-distance events. We talked for a while about cycling and my problem with dehydration. He has been in my situation many times and offered a couple tips to consider in the future. However, he emphasized how dangerous dehydration is as there are no good warning signs as there are with bonking. He also explained how he dealt with hyperthermia on many rides.

Summary and lessons learned:

1. **Nutrition:** Remember under ride preparation, I said I thought that I had a good nutrition and hydration plan. Not so, I have a lot more to learn. I knew the theory; but not the practice. I imagine it takes experience with one's own body. I had liquid nutrition in two of my three water bottles and I think I actually over did it. I was feeling bloated and uncomfortable during much of the ride. It makes since now...I was essentially eating every time I took a drink. I also felt obligated to scarf down a lot of solid munchies at the rest stops. All this resulted in an upset stomach.
2. **Hydration.** I knew it was important; but somehow I got off my plan. This was partly because I was feeling uncomfortable from eating too much. I did not drink extra water at the rest stops as I had planned except at rest stop #2. I should have had more discipline and stuck to my plan. I also should have had only one water bottle for nutrition and two for hydration. When it got cooler in the evening and my mind shifted to pain management and finishing, I think I forgot about drinking.
3. **Perceived Effort:** I liked and still liked this idea. It really worked for me and allowed me to keep a good attitude for most of the ride. Backing off just a little for a normal training pace made it seem like I could go forever. I think this must be what others refer to as 'spinning.' I never quite understood that term as I am always spinning. However, it seems to emphasize the increased cadence/spin resulting in a decreased effort or strain on your body.
4. **Consistency:** One should not make significant changes to one's bike before a big event. I knew this, but it happened anyway. I had a new body sock (tent as I sometimes refer to it) and it was tighter than my old one. It felt slightly uncomfortable or different during the ride. My bike lights failed the week before and I was using borrowed ones. They did not quite fit properly on my bike and were a slight distraction. Additionally, I was not familiar with the procedures for light drop-off and pick-up. I should have told them when I dropped off my lights that I needed them delivered to rest stop #7.
5. **Hemet:** Except for the lack of porta-potties, Hemet was a nicely organized double century. There were only about 250 riders starting over a two hour period, so there were never very many at a rest stop. I like the way they tracked all riders even confirming your arrival at each rest stop.
6. **Riders:** I was struck by two characteristics of the riders. The average age is...well...old. At 58, I was certainly not out of place. In fact, 30 of the 145 riders were older than me. Two, double century riders seem to know each other. There were lots of California Triple Crown jerseys indicating at least three doubles in a year...I saw one indicating 5 doubles in a year and I as I mentioned earlier, one rider told me she was on her 40th double. Below is an age chart of this year's finishers:

Age	# of Riders
61-70	16
51-60	50
41-50	57
31-40	15
21-30	5

7. **California Roads:** Hemet again confirmed California roads are deteriorating fast. On the actual double route, they were not bad except for one six mile stretch. They were certainly not as bad as during the Palm Springs Century. The freeways getting to/from Hemet were terrible with a lot of traffic and construction...allow extra time.
8. **Pacelines:** Lately, I have not been very happy with my century times. However, I have realized that 90% of time on these rides I am riding totally solo. Many riders do the entire ride in a paceline of 4 to 6 riders. They are probably using 30% less energy or are able to ride a lot faster for the same energy use. It seems like ultra-distance cycling should be a solo event.

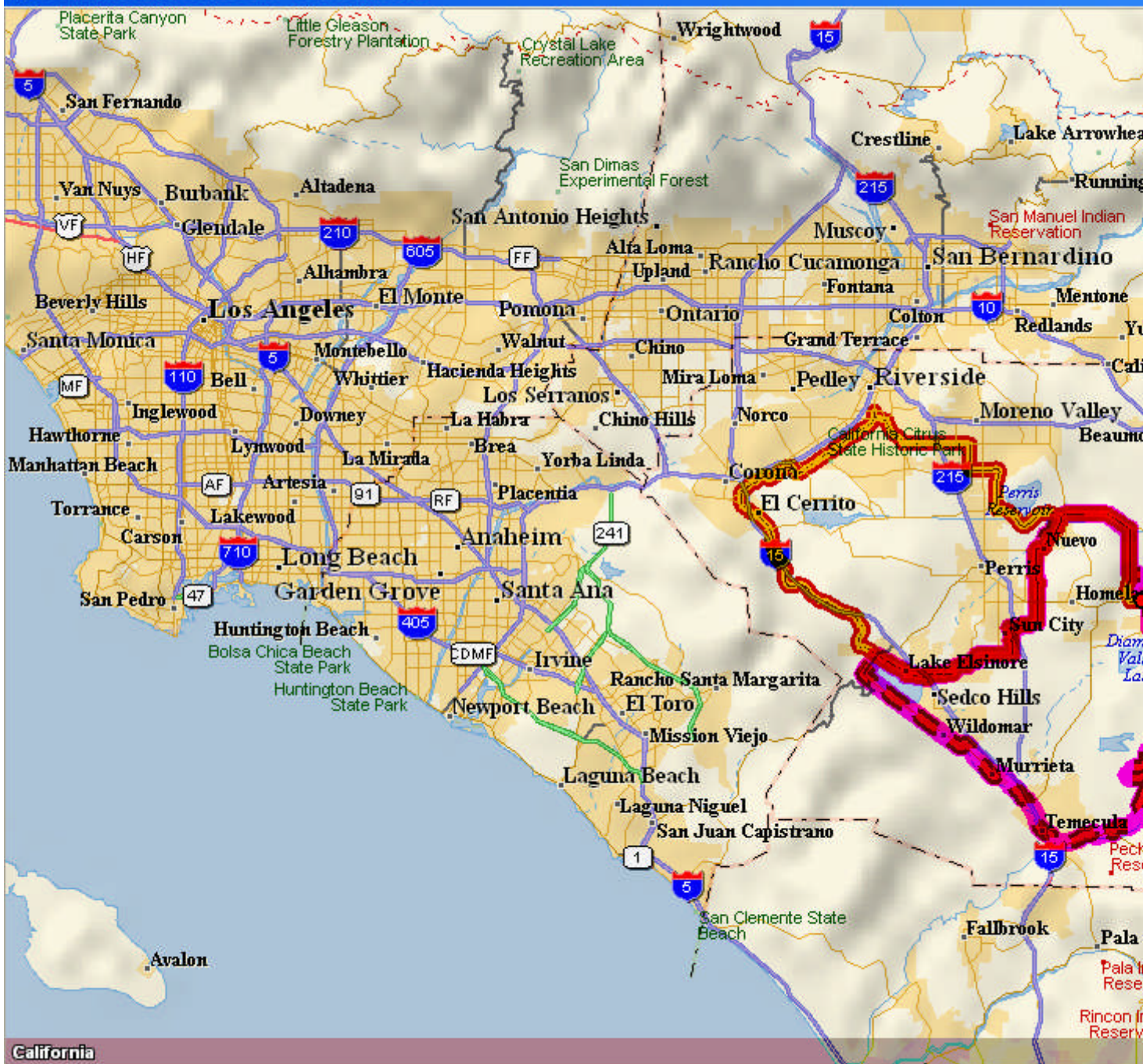
Well, until the next one....The End!

Picture taken during the second loop.



Hemet Double Century showing both loops

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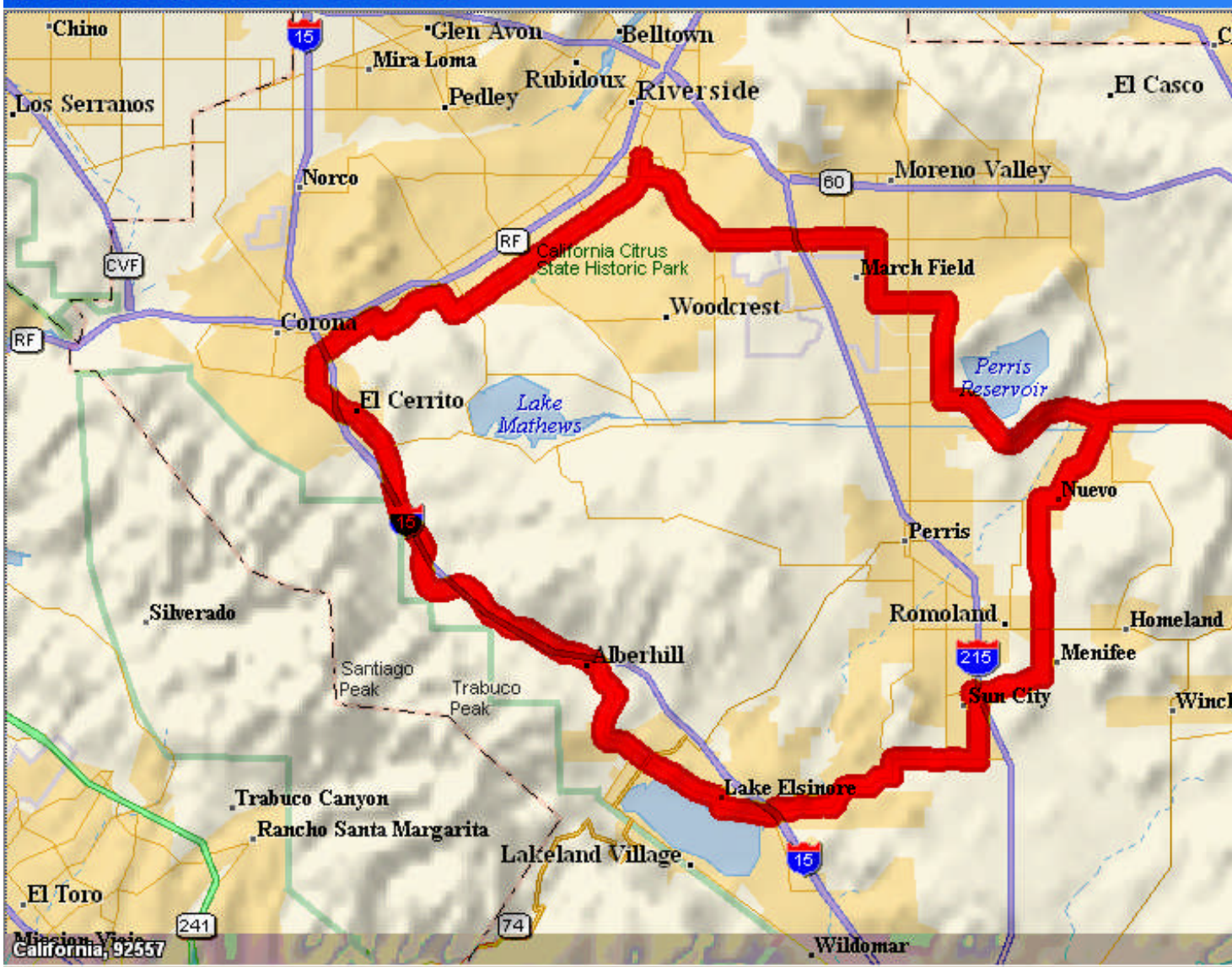


California

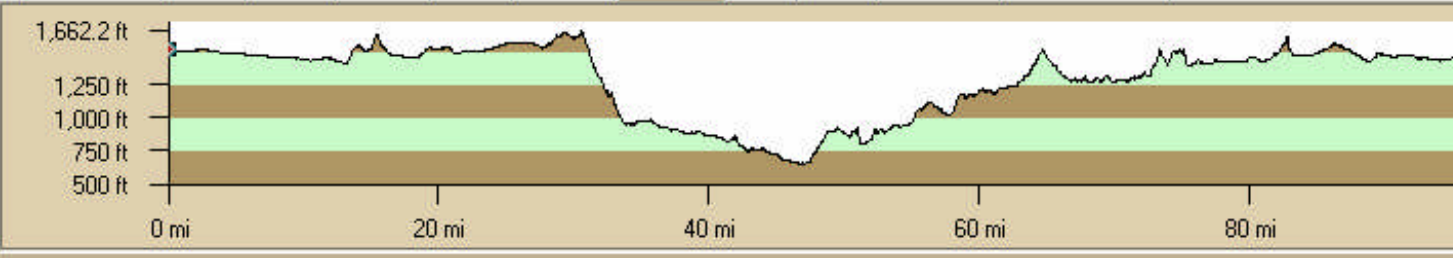
- Map Files
- Find
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- Route**
- Profile
- 3-D
- Info
- NetLink
- Map Display

Hemet Double Loop 1

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Map Files Find Print Draw GPS Route Profile 3-D Info NetLink Map Display



Windows taskbar with the 'start' button and several open application windows: 'Links', '2 NTV...', 'Window...', 'Inbox - ...', 'Senior ...', and 'My'.

Hemet Loop 2

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