

Santa Cruz Randonneurs

GRAY WHALE RAMBLE

RUSA Permanent Route #708

A Permanent Brevet of 200 kms

Time Limit: From 6 hours, 40 minutes to 13 hours, 20 minutes

Pre-ride Information—PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Unlike the brevets of the Santa Cruz Randonneurs, this ride is a “permanent”. Being a permanent means it is a self-conducted ride with a date and starting time of the rider’s choice. It is sanctioned by Randonneurs USA, and counts toward its Distance Awards and R-12 medal. In order to participate, you must be a current member of Randonneurs of USA.

Route Description: This is an out-and-back route with lots of fine scenery and very easy navigation. The ride starts and ends in Aptos at the Safeway/Starbucks at the Rancho Del Mar shopping center. The route has nine miles of urban riding north through Santa Cruz, and then goes along the beautiful coast highway all the way to Half Moon Bay, and finally reaches Moss Beach. After that control, the route makes u-turn and riders return to the start/finish in Aptos by the same route.

Overall the Gray Whale route is “lumpy” and has about 5800 feet of vertical gain. There is nothing extremely difficult in terms of climbing, but there are few flat sections either. The hardest part is the stiff 1-mile climb up to the Junction of Hwy 1 & Stage Road in the San Gregorio/Tunitas Creek region. Besides that ascent, most of the route would be called moderate-to-easy, with most climbs having less than 8% gradients. Still, there is a fair amount of altitude gain from the numerous short ascents, and the wind could be in your face, so the typical rider will be happy he or she brought a triple crankset along. Strong riders will want something like a 39x27t low gear if they run a double crankset.

Weather: This ride is designed to be done year-round, but cold winter rain storms might be tough to survive since they roll unimpeded off the Pacific Ocean. Coastal winds can also make the ride challenging any time of year, so come with a determined attitude to finish. This is a good summer ride when inland regions are suffering under high temperatures, but some out-of-area riders are surprised at how cool it can be in July along the coast due to drizzle and fog. In winter, when the inland roads are frosty and dank from months of rain, the coastal highway is free of ice and generally nice to cycle on (if it is not raining, anyway.)

Start Times: You should choose a start time between 5 AM and 11 AM in order to find stores open during the ride to get receipts to prove your passage. This is probably not a good night ride due to urban traffic in Santa Cruz, the lack of services along the coast, and the vital control in Moss Beach closes at 9 PM.* Generally speaking, an early start around 6-7 AM will help you get farther north before the north wind starts to blow, plus you’ll enjoy better cycling during the first nine miles on the streets through Soquel and Santa Cruz. (Winter months are generally the best in terms of strong winds, but they are the rainiest too, so come prepared with proper clothing layers if the forecast is iffy.)

*If you want to do this as a night ride, we can make arrangements to do a postcard control in Moss Beach. A start time after the evening commute (say, 8 PM) is advised. When you select a date, look for a full moon—but come ready for the possibility of evening fog too. You’ll want to carry a good amount of food and water too. Once leaving Santa Cruz, Half Moon Bay will have the only stores open at night.

Services: To buy food and drink along the route going outbound, you’ll find 24-hour stores in Santa Cruz and the first control in Aptos is a 24-hour Safeway. (It has a Starbucks that opens around 6 AM too.) Once north of Santa Cruz, you’ll find stores in Davenport (mile 18), Gazos Creek (mile 33), Half Moon Bay (mile 56) and Moss Beach, (mile 62). On the return, you’ll go past Half Moon Bay (mile 68), Gazos Creek (mile 92), Davenport (mile 106), and then in numerous locations in Santa Cruz. Most of these places open around 8 AM and close around 6-8 PM; none are open all night except in Santa Cruz, Aptos and Half Moon Bay. There are many state beaches and parks along the route with pit toilets that are easily accessible during the brevet.

Start/Finish Location: This brevet begins and ends at the Safeway/Starbucks in the Rancho del Mar shopping center in Aptos, California. The Safeway is open 24-hours. You’ll need receipts from the start **and** the finish; the time imprint on each receipt is your verification or “control”. (It is okay to have store receipts which show times a few minutes off from the official start/finish times). If you want to use the Starbucks at the Safeway, that is fine too. There is a restroom inside the Safeway, in the back.

If driving to the start, get on Highway 1 in the Monterey Bay region, either northbound or southbound as needed to reach Aptos. Look for the State Park Drive exit in Aptos, south of Santa Cruz. The shopping center is just off the freeway, inland from the freeway (not on the ocean side.) Look for the Safeway gasoline station on the corner of State Park Drive and Soquel Drive for a landmark; the market is to your right, located inside the shopping center.

IMPORTANT PARKING NOTICE: Please do not cause us problems by parking near the Safeway store. The parking lot near the market is small and they HATE having their spaces used by cyclists who will be gone all day. Try to park farther away in the outer reaches of the shopping center (near the movie theaters is a good choice) or out on the street, then ride your bike a short distance back to the Safeway. *Please do not wear out our welcome by parking thoughtlessly.*

Control Procedures: There are three controls on this route. In addition to using store at the start/finish in Aptos, you'll need to stop and get proof of passage in Moss Beach, then again back in Aptos. Store receipts are fine, as are ATM receipts. You can ask for a store stamp at any control in lieu of a receipt, but if they do not offer one then you are expected to buy something to get a receipt. The time-stamped receipt is your proof of passage. Write the time on your brevet card in the appropriate place and put your last name on the store receipt. (Sometimes the store's cash register receipt time will be a little off; when you mark your brevet card, use the actual time on the brevet card.)

You can ride this permanent alone or in a group; if you are with a group that stays together the entire way, then only one receipt is need for the group at each control so long as you put everyone's name on the back of the receipt (but everyone should mark their own cards with the same time.) If the riders split up, they then need to get their own receipts. Tandem teams only need one receipt for their team, not for each rider.

Each control has an opening and closing time. To get ride credit you must stay within these times, which are based upon the starting time and date you chose.

Be aware that there may also be secret controls during this brevet, so stay on the route. If you should get lost or go looking for food, backtrack to where you got off-course, otherwise you might miss a secret control. Failure to sign in at a secret control means disqualification from the brevet. If there are any secret controls, they will be in plain sight and impossible to miss.

After the brevet, return your brevet card and receipts to the ride organizer with the stamped and addressed envelope in your rider packet. Sign the back of the card and make sure all the times are recorded on the card for each control. You have ten days to return them by mail for your ride credit to count. Send them to Santa Cruz Randonneurs, 226 West Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Regulations: During your ride, all the normal rules of randonneuring apply. Go to the SCR and RUSA websites to familiarize yourself with the regulations if this type of cycling is new to you. You **must** begin your ride at the time you selected, and any secret control opening and closing times will be based upon that start time. If you are riding at night, be sure you have all the required lights and safety gear outlined in the regulations; anyone found to be riding at night without them will be automatically disqualified. (And remember that the coast can be quite foggy any time of year and you may need your lights and reflective gear even during daytime.)

If you should fail to start, or end the ride prematurely, please contact the ride organizer as soon as is practical. We have RUSA matters to attend to whether or not you finish the ride successfully. Please be considerate and not endanger your future participation in future SCR events or permanents by overlooking this essential detail. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Good luck and good riding! ☺