

The Mt. Baldy Trip:

Dan Dan came up with the idea to ride Mt. Baldy and proposed it to Tone and I. Dan Dan had hiked Mt. Baldy before and convinced Tone and I that it would be a great ride. The plan was for Tone and I to meet Dan Dan at the Mt. Baldy Lodge the evening before our ride and then spend the night at the Snow Crest Lodge in order to become acclimated to the altitude. The drive up to Mt. Baldy Village was uneventful but once we got there things got more interesting.

Snow Crest Lodge (the place we were to spend the night) was pretty funky. When we walked through the doors there were a half dozen of what appeared to be locals sitting around in the bar. Tone got us registered and the lady that ran the place walked us through the kitchen and out the back door to show us where our cabin was. We drove up the steep dirt road and found our cabin. The other cabins around there had motion sensors on their outside lights but ours didn't. The night was darker than shit and Tone didn't have a flashlight with him so we used my lighter to find our way from the car to the front door. It was a dumpy little cabin with one bedroom and several couches in the front room, one of which pulled out into a bed. Tone and I put our bikes in the cabin, then headed back down to the lodge to wait for Dan Dan.

Tone was hungry and ate a hamburger while we played pool and waited for Dan Dan. Just as we finished our 3rd game the lady that ran the place told us that she'd sent Dan Dan up to the cabin. We headed up there and after getting Dan Dan's stuff unloaded we built a fire in the fireplace and sat in front of it shooting the shit until 1:30, then went to sleep. Tone took the bed and I slept on one of the couches while Dan Dan who'd brought a sleeping bag put some cushions from the other couches on the floor and slept there. I was the last one to fall asleep and had a hard time doing so listening to Tone's and Dan Dan's snoring.

I woke up the next morning around 8:30 as did Dan Dan to the sound of Tone going out the front door. We got up and walked down to the lodge for breakfast. There wasn't anyone else in the place except for us. The person who waited on us was the same person who cooked and served our breakfast. I ordered poached eggs and toast while Tone and Dan Dan had blueberry pancakes. When we finished breakfast Dan Dan and Tone ran Tone's car to the trail's end while I stayed at the cabin. When they got back, we loaded the bikes on the Dan Dan's car and headed out for the ski lift.

Dan Dan and Tone loaded their bikes on a lift and I loaded my bike on the one behind them. We all knew we had a climb ahead of us once we got to the top of the ski lift, but Dan Dan was the only one that had covered this ground before and hadn't said anything

about what a tough climb it was going to be. I had done numerous rides with Dan Dan before in the Saddleback Mountains, at Lake Big Bear and locally in the foothills of Foot Hill Ranch, so I was thinking along the line that this ride was going to be a piece of cake, seeing as how we were taking a lift that would drop us off close (3 miles) from the top of Mt. Baldy. I found out later what I hadn't realized was, in those 3 miles we were going to ascend 2200 feet.

When we got to the top of the lift we were chatting with some of the locals. They seemed to be amazed that we were going to attempt to ride our bikes to the top of Mt. Baldy and just as amazed that we were going to attempt to ride down Baldy Trail. We took some photos there, then started our climb/push to the top. It was a hard climb all the way and there were many stops to let our hearts rest along the way. There was some interesting terrain and patches of snow along the way but all of it was a hard uphill climb. On the way up my right leg started bothering me which slowed me up but fortunately for me there was an uphill wind that day. The fortunate part of the uphill wind was that the blueberry pancakes Dan Dan and Tone ate for breakfast had given them gas something fierce. It was to the point that one would think they'd eaten some sort of propulsion fuel for breakfast.

Dan Dan had an altimeter, was checking it on the way up and concluded that he was farting every 20 feet of ascent. Tone had summit fever big time (or perhaps more pancake propulsion) and beat Dan Dan and I to the top. It had taken us over 3 hours to get up there, we'd gone roughly 3 miles and gained 2200 feet in elevation. If you figure in the fart factor (divide 2200 feet of elevation by 1 fart every 20 feet of ascent X 2 (Dan Dan and Tone) it took 220 farts to get us to the summit!

The top of Mt. Baldy lived up to its name i.e. there was nothing (no trees or bushes) up there, nothing but rocks. We took some more pictures, then headed down Old Baldy Trail (a descent of 6000 feet in 6 miles) (the other side of the mountain) to Baldy Village.

The ride down from the summit turned out to be just as difficult as the climb up. Dan Dan had hiked up Old Baldy Trail to the summit a year or 2 previous and told Tone and I the trail was in good shape (Dan Dan retracted that statement once we got to Baldy Village). It was really a hiking trail with lots of logs and switch backs that we had to get off the bikes to get over and sometimes under. The first 2/3's of the way down, the trail consisted mostly of shale and was overgrown with deerbrush. When we weren't sliding down shale (seat lowered all the way, both feet planted in the shale whenever possible, the rear wheel locked up and judiciously applying the front brake) we were getting scratched and poked to hell by the overgrown deer brush. Less than 1/3 the way down it started to storm (thunder and a light rain). I was concerned about getting struck by

lightening, as I'd seen a large number of trees that looked like they'd been struck. This made us slide on the shale and get scratched by the deerbrush that much faster. I think that Tone and Dan Dan were concerned about the lightening as well.

At one point when I was passing a large fallen tree whose trunk had been notched out where the path was and my peddle got caught on the trunk which instantly stopped the bike, but not me. I endo'd and after landing on my back the bike landed on top of me. I didn't get hurt and hurriedly got back up and on the bike so as to keep pace with Tone and Dan Dan. 100 yards down the trail I realized that I'd lost a water bottle in the fall. I went back up the trail and found the water bottle where I'd fallen then headed back down and found Dan Dan and Tone waiting for me further down the trail.

It seemed that the further we went the more fucked up the trail got. Tone's right leg was feeling the stress of the climb too, and since I was behind him the trip down the hill slowed somewhat. Dan Dan had gone ahead to the point that he couldn't hear us when we called out to him. I watched Tone crash/endo in front of me about 3 times. The last time he endo'd, Tone was passing by a formation of large rocks and when he was thrown off the bike, it was head first into one of them. Tone's helmet saved his head and only suffered a little dent which is a lot less than Tone would have had in his head. At that point Tone decided that it was too dangerous for him to ride so he walked it for a long stretch. At one point Dan Dan waited for Tone and I to catch up with him and told us of a fall that he'd had where he'd endo'd and landed head first in a large bush with his bike on top of him.

About the last 1000 feet of descent, the trail got decent, a fast singletrack that was minus the shale, switchbacks and deerbrush we'd experience the previous 5000 feet of decent, to the point that and we got some good speed (part of what downhill is all about). Also in contrast to the previous 5000 feet was the fact that there was a creek and shade trees. This last section of the trail was what we'd expected the whole ride down to be. When we got to the bottom (Baldy Village) Dan Dan was there waiting for us with some cold PowerAid he'd bought which totally hit the spot and was gratefully appreciated. I waited at the bottom of the hill, riding my bike around in circles to avoid being eaten alive by the 100's of mosquitoes who'd obviously been born in the creek we'd admired the last 1000 feet of decent, while Dan Dan and Tone went to get Tone's car at the bottom of the ski lift. When they came back Tone and I loaded the bikes on the back of Tone's car, said our good-byes to Dan Dan and headed back to the land of palm trees and beaches.

The ride home was uneventful other than when we got to my place and I got out of Tone's car, I noticed my leg muscles were feeling a bit more than stiff (stomped, beat-up

and whooped). As soon as I walked in the door of my place, I immediately put everything down, jumped in the shower and was felt much more human when I got out.

The Mt. Baldy ride was to later be known as "The Ride To Hell And Back", but you know, I'd definitely do it again, but not without lightweight lightening proof total body armor and a gas mask (gas mask in case of another case of blueberry pancake ingestion/propulsion).