

Arthritis Foundation's California Coast Classic.

By
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One symbol of To Shin Do is the person stretching beyond their comfort zone. A simple yet profound message, get outside your comfort zone and reap the rewards. Applying this to my love of cycling I wondered how far could I go under my own power? How about San Francisco to Los Angeles? This year I joined over 200 cyclists in the Arthritis Foundation's California Coast Classic. A charity bike tour called the California Coast Classic Bicycle Tour sponsored by Amgen. So not only do you get to experience one of the most dramatic coastlines in the world but also help fund arthritis research. Each rider had to raise at least \$3000. This year \$1 million was raised.

This 525-mile ride leaves from the Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco and arrives 8 days later at the Yahoo Center in Santa Monica. The ride hugged the coastline making the constant of the Pacific Ocean a familiar companion nearly every day of the ride.

Day one we arrived early for breakfast and left together as a group from Fisherman's Wharf. After a side trip over the Golden Gate Bridge we headed down towards Santa Cruz. 88 miles later we set up camp in a small park. Day two was much shorter with only a 53 mile push to Monterey. The last 10 miles consisted of rolling bike paths with the reward of Monterey's Cannery Row. Day three was even shorter at 40 miles but more challenging entering the hills and spectacular landscape of Big Sur. We would sit around campfires recounting the day's challenges and changing views.

Day four was my favorite and the most dramatic. The tall redwoods slowly shed to amazing crevasses opening to the sea. Incredible blue-green waters of the ocean sharply boarded by rocks. A set of challenging climbs referred to as the *twins* was the biggest hurdle of the day. The hardest climbs of the entire ride gave way to the greatest reward; two miles of down hill sweeping curves. Tucking in and grabbing to lowers bars sent you effortlessly down hill at speeds between 25-40 mph. Every square inch of you skin tingles from the wind and you truly feel alive. Passing on to the relative flats beneath Hearst Castle, we camped at the picturesque beach at San Simeon.

Along the route we would overlap with a group of veterans. The inspiring group of wounded warriors, were raising money and awareness with a Ride2Recovery. If one man fell behind on a climb a stronger rider would drop back and help him up the hill with a helping hand on the back.

Day five we hugged the ocean from San Simeon to Pismo. If you have not been to Pismo beach, it has some of the softest sands. Absolutely beautiful. Day six brought more climbs as we made our way inland toward wine country surrounding the Danish-flavored town of Solvang. Day seven took us on to 101 and over the Goleta Pass for an 85 mile trek. The highlight was stopping at the Arthritis Foundation Santa Barbara Office and the benefactors of the medical research. The campsite that night was Ventura State Beach. The last day came all too soon. We headed into our backyard running down the PCH in to Santa Monica. After witnessing the amazing California coastlines and I rediscovered how really beautiful our nearby coastline are. After the final 60 miles, we cross the finish line in Los Angeles and reunite with our families.

