



Freewheelin'

August/September 2003

KVR (Kettle Valley Railway) Memories & More

Editor's Notes

Marion Perry

Beautiful, challenging, hot, dusty, fun, frustrating—the **KVR Tour** was all these and more. Signs on the route were often lacking, and the guide book was not always clear. The 14 cyclists on the trip eventually cycled as 3 different groups according to preferred speed and touring style.

Freewheeler Tours are common adventures. There was some confusion at the beginning that eventually resolved itself; however, on future tours a short meeting the evening before the start to clarify plans such as departure time and cycling/touring styles would help new folks fit in more easily.

Congratulations to Karen and Tamela, the only 2 to cycle the entire proposed route from Midway to Merritt. Brenda, Gord, Steve, Allison, and John persevered as far as Princeton. Their adventures included fording a stream and zip lining their gear across (the best part of the trip according to some). The remaining 7 because of work commitments, nagging injuries or the heat, stopped at Penticton. (The thermometer read 39° in the shade when we arrived and Donna Solie was waiting with cold beer and cherries – thank you, thank you, thank you!)

We were fortunate in timing our KVR Tour. The destruction of these historic trestles and the surrounding forest is a loss to all.

The **Berry Ride** in late July started in Balgonie (White City for Brian and Donna who started from home on the tandem) and went up highway # 10 to a berry farm close to the Edenwold turnoff. At the farm we ate our

lunch and all the saskatoons, raspberries and strawberries we could pick and consume. It was a wonderful ride and feast. Thanks, Sharon Baldwin, for organizing it.

The **Great Annual Saskatchewan Pedal**, the SCA supported tour was held over Labour Day Weekend. It was indeed all GREAT - weather, cycling, food and companions. A report by Cam Stephens from Saskatoon gives the details.

The **Freewheelers' trailer** has been totally rebuilt and will now hold 15 bikes. Thanks to Brian Ferguson for taking on this task.

Rumour has it that Noreen will be hosting a house warming potluck possibly combined with a ride. Proposed date is near the end of the September. Stay tuned to the bikeline and the e-group. Details for both are in the box at the lower left of this page.

The Freewheelers' gpfm e-mail address is malfunctioning. Send any Freewheeler e-mail to aubergreen@yahoo.ca.

There are fewer photos than usual in this newsletter. The KVR Photo album is posted at: <http://www.gpfm.sk.ca/~wheelers/HTML/short.html>. If you have to type all that, just go to Google and search for Wascana Freewheelers, click the "Shorts" tab on the home page, and you'll be at the photo album. The most recent newsletter is posted under "New Stuff".

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Newsletter. All articles and photos related to club cycling are welcome.

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Kettle Valley Railway (KVR)

Brian Fergusson

Day One (Monday, July 7)

The day started uneventfully – not! After feeling incredibly disorganized while getting ready (including leaving my cycling shoes in Okanagan Falls – but that's another story!), I started out from camp with my Burley Nomad trailer "loaded to the gunwales". I hadn't completed even one city block when I heard a strange creak from behind. I looked back to see what had made the noise, and I was shocked to see the left wheel at about a 20 degree angle from the vertical position it was supposed to maintain! Upon stopping, I discovered the steel sleeve into which the quick release skewer fit has become detached from the aluminum cross tube. The 2" screw that held it in appeared as if it had never been properly attached. After borrowing a screwdriver from one of our camp neighbors (a Washington state resident in Canada for a dog show), I re-attached the ill-behaving sleeve – as well as making darn sure the one on the other side wasn't loose as well.

After that brief episode I was ready to get rolling again. I soon found myself in the company of Brenda Ziolkowski, Gord Kerfoot, Alison Purdy and Steve Grieve. Imagine our chagrin when we reached the Mile 0 museum, only to find the others had forged ahead! So, with Brenda's guiding skills and map-reading abilities being put to the test, we headed down the KVR trail. The first few kilometers found us riding few remnants of the original rail bed, as development in the area has eliminated much of it. Further along, we started with the first of many, many gates. Each time, we had to stop, dismount, pass through the gate, close it, then re-mount our bikes and continue on. This routine was repeated countless times during our first day.

Some of our group (who shall remain nameless to protect their egos) chose to avoid one of the detours and attempted to ride one of the trail sections that was closed. They slid under some barbed wire and rode along the rail bed for a while before realizing they could go no further. At that point, they abandoned the trail and headed "cross country" to join the detour. They discovered, however, the field and ditch they were pushing their bikes through was no "walk in the park". By the time they reached the gravel road over which the detour was routed, they were covered in burrs and spear grass.

While Brenda was doing a fine job of navigating, the "updated" map she had been given was in error as often as not. In one case, it showed us re-connecting with the rail bed at 11.3 Km, when in fact it was closer to 13.6 Km.

At Km 24.9, we all stopped for a soothing and refreshing splash in the Kettle River. A little on the cool side, it served as a fine refresher before we continued. At that point, we agreed it was best to not try to make the first day's original destination of Beaverville. It was in excess of 30 deg. C, and with all the dismounting and re-mounting, we weren't making great progress (not to mention a bunch of detours).

The fields near Zamora were a challenge with the trailer, as the trail was so overgrown there was only room for the bike – meaning the extra width of the trailer was dragging on foliage on both sides. My only choice was to gear down and power on.

During the first day we also ran across a number of "Texas gates". While initially everyone tackled these gates by dismounting and walking across, by 30 Km I believe we were all riding across them. They're a little disconcerting (and dangerous) on 100+ PSI road bike tires, but fat knobbies @ 30 – 45 PSI make riding them a "piece of cake"!! And, bonus, the Nomad tracked and bounced along pretty well.

We were quite disappointed to find the water shown in the book as available at Westbridge Station was, in fact, nowhere in sight. Comforted by the knowledge that Ron Keall had a water filter, we continued.

At 39.9 Km, we arrived at the Rhone Station – KVR Cyclists rest stop. There were numerous inscriptions by cyclists from all over the world – apparently this is a very popular place. We checked out the rail car and noted the visitors' book had entries from Karen Hardy, Tamela Friesen, Velda Back, John Kiloh and Peter Hein, all part of our group. We noted their entries about "great water", "thanks for the water", etc. – but we were dismayed to find there was none for us. All we found was an empty cooler!

Note: Later that day, when others joined us in camp, we found out there had been 44 cyclists through the rest stop that day, but none the day before (Sunday) – go figure.

Pressing on, we knew our destination (revised to be the Little Dipper Campground) was only a few Km away. Soon, we arrived and were pleased to see the sign that indicated they had potable drinking water (which was not indicated in the book). We found a camp site and then filled up our bottles and water carriers.

Oh, by the way, did I mention the dust? Sorry 'bout that, I guess it just slipped my mind – though I can't quite understand how. The hot, dry, dusty trail resulted in a fine coat of dust over almost everything. I don't think my white cycling socks will ever be the same.

After picking our spots and setting up our tents, the five of us who had arrived together (Marion Perry, Ron, and Michael and Riley Richter) headed to the river for a refreshing dip in the cool water. Just as we were returning to our site, Brenda, Gord, Alison and Steve arrived. It was time for dinner! We all had our provisions, and after dinner settled down to a variety of activities, including a nice, relaxing fire.

Summary: 47.4 Km, average speed 6.2 Km/hr (includes all stop and rest time)

Little Dipper Campground: \$15.00 per site (tax incl.), good water, pit toilets, no showers.

Day Two (Tuesday, July 8)

After a very peaceful and restful 9 hour sleep near the continuous burbling of the Kettle River, we awoke to the dawn of what promised to be another wonderful day.

While Day One had been mainly sunny, Day Two had a little bit of cloud cover and didn't get quite as warm – though it was 16 deg. C by 8:00 A.M.

The trail was better marked and generally easier to ride than the first day, with only 2 gates and 1 Texas Gate (which was not one you'd want to ride.) At 47.3 Km there was a very photogenic swimming hole but, try as we might, we couldn't convince Riley to take the 30 ft. plunge off what appeared to be the perfect rock – go figure.

At 48.9 Km, we began a 12.3 Km stretch of trail which was shared with motor vehicles, though there were none on the trail when we rode it. The inevitable result of the shared use, however, was a washboard surface that was virtually non-stop. We tried riding on both sides, in the middle, everywhere we could think of, but this was just one stretch that would remain unforgettably etched in our cycling memories!

After “washboard hell”, it was then only a short 7 Km ride to Beaverdell Station, and another 1 Km to Zack's Creekside Campground. For \$7 per person, we had a very nice meadow, located just over a short bridge and secluded from the rest of the campground. Just outside the meadow, I ran into Troy and Christa (sp?) from Calgary. After a brief conversation, I discovered they had started in Castlegar and were also riding to McCulloch Lake the next day.

The camping fee included shower facilities – and did that shower ever feel good! I also took the opportunity to wash my cycling clothes, and it appears there is a possibility my socks may actually

be white again some day.

The Beaverdell General Store seemed to be there for the sole purpose of selling liquor, beer, etc., as they had a better selection of alcoholic beverages than they did of food! I was not successful in finding bagels, but was able to get some cinnamon raisin English muffins for breakfasts. In addition, I grabbed a few oranges, though I understood from those who were there earlier that there were none. The store must have re-stocked, as oranges were not available only an hour earlier.

After hearing from a reliable source (a.k.a. Ron) that the “Our Café” served very good home made French fries, I decided to check for my self. As it turned out, the information was correct, though the large plate of fries (\$3.50) was almost enough to send me to my tent for an afternoon nap!

Later in the afternoon, Brenda discovered something had chewed through her bag of GORP and gotten into the contents. Not only that, but there were teeth or chew marks on the pull tab of her panniers where the GORP had been stashed. Now, what kind of critter is smart enough to open up a pannier in order to get at the contents within?

On the other hand, my bag of bagels was found on the lawn by Michael, some 12-15 ft. from where it had been left in an unzipped pannier. Of course, the animal had chewed through the plastic bag and nibbled on my last bagel. So, as I write this, it's 8:00 P. M. local time and Ron and Gord are working to hoist our food up in the air for the evening, hoping this will keep it safe from the furry little critters that seem to want it.

Meanwhile, next to us in the campground, three cyclists from Nanaimo and Campbell River have arrived and set up their tents. They tell me they started the day in Midway, and they too are going to McCulloch Lake the next day.

Day Two Summary: 27.12 Km, average speed 9.6 Km/hr (includes all stop and rest time)

Zack's Creekside Campground: \$7.00 per person (tax incl.), good water, flush toilets, showers.

Day Three (Wednesday, July 9)

After another great sleep, I awoke at 5:45 A.M., and had coffee brewing within 10 minutes. Michael and I were the first up, but we were soon joined by the others. We followed our normal routines, and by 7:30 were ready to roll – or at least thought we were. Before heading out, however, Michael discovered he was missing a screw where his rack attached to the seat stays. After a few minutes, I found one the right size in my tool kit, along with a nut and lock washer.

By 7:45, all was well and we were on the road. We had to back track approximately 1 Km (on asphalt) to re-connect with the trail, and we were on our way. The first few kilometers were an interesting ride, as the trail was sprinkled liberally with pot-holes – so we had the opportunity to try out our bike handling skills in a sort of pseudo-slalom. On our way to Wilkinson Creek, we spotted the 3 women from Nanaimo behind us. I found this interesting, as they had left before us, and they had indicated to me they hated to backtrack and knew a short cut to the KVR trail. Funny thing about short cuts – I guess they don't always work out the way they're supposed to!

We (Marion, Ron, Riley, Michael & I) stopped at the Wilkinson Creek bridge for a photo, snack and bio break. After a 10-15 minute stay, we moved on, with Michael, Riley and I pulling away from Marion and Ron. It was during this fairly rocky stretch that I was advised by Riley that I had somehow succeeded in getting the trailer up on one wheel!

A short while later, I succeeded (if that's the correct term) in getting the trailer on no wheels – skidding down the trail on the Q.R. skewer and the knurled plastic knob that holds the cover on and the crossbar between the side hoops. Apparently, while riding the trail on the right (East side at that point) side, the left wheel was on the raised centre strip, some 4 or so inches higher than the right wheel. When the left wheel then hit a rock which was 4-5 inches high, it flipped the trailer onto its side. Of course, I heard and felt all this and, in my haste to stop, failed to get my feet out of the SPD pedals. Down I went on my left knee, banging, cutting and scraping it in the process – OUCH! To add insult to injury, the trailer was now upright – I guess my falling to the left generated enough rotational force to flip the trailer back onto its wheels. After that episode, I took advantage of the lesson and slowed down in areas that were uneven or rocky!

At 98.5 Km, we stopped at Arlington Lakes for a lunch stop, as we were more than half way to McCulloch Lake. After a short while, Marion and Ron re-joined us for lunch by the lake. Ron and Marion even changed into their bathing suits for a plunge. I took off ahead of Michael and Riley, after telling them that I would ride slowly and they could catch up. I had good intentions, but then my pace picked up to a natural rhythm. After 13 Km I stopped for a drink and snack break, and was just preparing to leave when they showed up.

That 13 Km stretch, I later reflected after riding it solo, had several (actually numerous) places where, if you slipped off the trail, you'd fall a long way before

the rocks stopped you – very suddenly. This wasn't merely a remote possibility, as it was easy to imagine how it could really happen.

The last 13-14 kilometers had a number of spots where the trail was covered with loose sand and gravel. While the bike was on a firm surface, the trailer wheels were dragging in the soft stuff. All I could do was gear down and grind it out. I'd estimate this comprised at least 1/3 of the final leg – yecch!

With only 1.4 Km to go, we reached the North end of Summit Lake, and a break in the trail. While there was a 2 x 10 bridging the gap, that didn't appeal to me – particularly with a 2-wheeled trailer. To the East of break, however, was a semblance of a trail bypassing the break, though the water was about 4" deep. We worked our way around, re-joined the trail, and rode the rest of the way to the McCulloch Lake Resort and Campground.

And what can we say about that campground – other than to avoid it. The staff appears to be poorly trained, with little consideration to customer service. The fee for group camping was \$8.00 per person (plus 7% G.S. T.) – and while that included showers, it does not include potable water. For that, you'll have to pay another \$1.00 per litre. As to the showers, that's another story. The shower building had 3 showers, but they're just stalls in one room. This basically forces the men and women to coordinate their showers to keep the genders apart – unless, of course, they decide to shower together.

Some more horror stories:

- a) The outhouses I visited were probably the worst I've ever run across – and I've been in a lot of outhouses.
- b) Tamela and Karen stopped at the resort restaurant for a hamburger. When Tamela was finished and attempted to order another burger, she was told it was too late, and she could only order off the dinner menu.
- c) A number of us were ordering one of the local beers, but after a while our group was told they were out of that brand. Imagine our surprise when we observed one of the other patrons being served that very brand!

Around dinner, I was advised the campground was expecting a busload of unsupervised teenagers that evening. Supposedly, they were going to be sharing our group camping area. Later, we settled down for what could have ended up being an interesting evening but, as it turned out, the expected busload didn't arrive and we had a great sleep.

Day Three Summary: 55.98 Km, average speed 9.0 Km/hr (includes all stop and rest time)

McCulloch Lake Resort and Campground: \$8.00 per person (tax extra), no potable water, pit toilets, showers.

Day Four (Thursday, July 10)

Wow, what a great day! I awoke at 5:25 A.M., had breakfast, broke camp and was on the trail at 7:34 A.M.

The trail had a mixed bag of smooth, hard, flat sections, as well as some wet areas and rocky patches. For most of the trail before the Myra Canyon area, I found myself in a comfortable rhythm at 18-21 Km/hr. I stopped a few times for photos leading up to the section of trestles, at which point Michael and Riley, and then Marion and Ron arrived. Then we started down the trestles – what a hoot! I totally forgot about the height of the trestles, focusing instead on riding across the planked decks. It was a little disconcerting, however, to look down and see all the old timbers piled up at the bottom – of nearly all the trestles. It appeared standard practice for all the maintenance and repair work over the years was not to haul the old wood away, but merely to discard it and let it accumulate at the bottom of the trestles.

The two tunnels in this section were very easy to ride, and were short enough that with the bright sunshine outside you didn't even need a headlight. I was riding with sunglasses that I could easily remove when I entered the tunnels, and I found my eyes quickly adjusted to the available light. I did turn my headlight on, but I found there was enough ambient light that I could barely tell that it was even working. Ah, but all too soon we were out of the Myra Canyon area, and there was only the trestle at Bellevue Creek (155.2 Km). Even if you don't want to ride the rest of the KVR, I'd recommend riding the Myra Canyon section.

We continued on, but the last 14 Km was a shared use / forest service road. As such, it had the occasional washboard, as well as a nearly continuous layer of loose sand. This had to be somebody's idea of a sick joke! After more gearing down and grinding, I made it to Chute Lake Resort shortly after noon. Now, is it me, or are "resort" operators on this trip generally downright miserable? When I went to check in, I was told we "should have made reservations", "should buy firewood by mid-afternoon as they were short-staffed", etc. There was no issue about whether they had space or not – they had lots of space. Pardon me, but as a paying customer, I only need to know whether they can accommodate my request – not to be needlessly admonished or hear a lengthy diatribe about the difficulties of running their business. It's no wonder they couldn't keep staff with an attitude like that! My mother always said "you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar", and perhaps these operators could use that approach and grow their businesses.

While I had plans to make my own lunch, I was feel-

ing somewhat warm and fatigued, so I ordered a cheeseburger, fries and a beer. While waiting at a table on the small deck, I had the opportunity to observe a few hummingbirds at work – what amazing creatures they are! The burger was good, the fries were excellent homemade fries, and the beer was wonderful.

After my lunch, I set up my tent to dry out the fly which was wet from that morning. While setting up the tent, I realized how incredibly hot it was, so I took a refreshing plunge in the lake. The lake was interesting – it was the color of steeped tea, but it was clear, didn't smell, and didn't stain clothes. After my dip, I sat around for a short while, then headed to the showers. Showers are a truly great invention, aren't they – particularly after a long, dusty ride. While there, I washed my jersey, shorts and socks for the next day – and created some brown / black / grey water. My clothes were certainly not clean, but at least they smell good and they're clean enough to wear.

We were making plans for dinner, along with fussing about getting everybody together for a group photo tonight or the next morning. As it turns out, after dinner we were able to round everyone up for a group photos, but for awhile it seemed like herding cats. Thanks to Karen and Tamela for packing the tripod along. After photos, we all packed our food away carefully to keep it away from the local chipmunks and/or ground squirrels. Some of the group hung their panniers up as one way to accomplish that.

Day Four Summary: 49.92 Km, average speed 10.9 Km/hr (includes all stop and rest time)
Chute Lake Resort and Campground: \$10.00 per person (tax extra), good water, flush toilets, showers.

Day Five (Friday, July 11)

I woke up at 5:20 this morning. It's a good thing this is the last day, as I keep waking up earlier each day. Who knows where this could end if the trip ran another week or two? I had my usual breakfast of a couple of English muffins with peanut butter. For a change of pace, and partially because I was a little low on coffee, I had a mocha with my breakfast – and it was good.

About 7:10 (or so), John headed out ahead of the rest of the group. Some 20 minutes or so later, I headed out. Once again, I started at a fairly easy pace, but that pace picked up to what felt like a quite natural pace. After a while, I checked my cycle computer and discovered I was rolling along at over 30 Km/hr! I realized I was probably pushing a little too hard and backed down to the 23-25 Km/hr range, and worked hard to keep it there.

Before I knew it, I had caught up to the three women from Nanaimo and Campbell River. After riding with

them a short while, we realized we were already at the Adra Tunnel bypass (11.7 Km from Chute Lake, at 183.1 Km). It was very clearly marked and mostly double track, but a much steeper descent that had me riding my brakes almost all the way down. At the bottom was soft sand, followed by a turn of approximately 120 degrees back onto the trail. Be careful about hitting this stuff too fast, or you'll find yourself in trouble in a hurry.

We quickly got back up to speed on the trail, and soon discovered John taking a break along the trail. A couple of kilometers later, the three women stopped for a rest and I was once again on my own.

Shortly after Glenfir Station (192.0 Km) the trail turned South, with Okanagan Lake in view. I stopped a number of times to take photos. After a short while, John caught up to me and we stood there, chatting about bikes and the tour. After 5-10 minutes or so, I headed out once again, stopping occasionally and taking photos along the way.

I stopped at The Little Tunnel (196.3 Km), taking a few more photos, when I noticed some familiar looking bushes. Lo and behold, overlooking Okanagan Lake were Saskatoon bushes, loaded with ripe berries – and they were very good!! What I can't understand is how those berries could be there, given the traffic the KVR has. Perhaps the locals don't realize what they are.

Once again, the KVR was covered with a fair amount of loose sand (1.5 – 2" deep). I followed the trail of someone who had been riding a bike with narrow, high pressure tires, and they appeared to be having a lot less fun than I was, as the tracks were weaving erratically all over the trail. I half-expected to see the signs of a crash, or the tracks going over the edge, but never saw any sign of either calamity.

Somewhere around Km 205, my bike started making a horrible grating noise, which appeared to be originating from the area of the cassette or rear derailleur. Given the almost complete drive train replacement I had given my bike before the tour, this was both unexpected and unwelcome – to say the least!! I spent a few minutes trying to figure out what the problem was, checking the tracking of the chain, the pulleys and cassette cogs – to no avail. Just when I was about to give up, I discovered the cause – the lower rack attachment screw was gone, and the leg of the rack had slipped inside the dropout, ending up on the smallest cog of the cassette. Once diagnosed, it took all of 2-3 minutes to find a screw in my tool bag, fix the problem and be on my way again.

At Km 207.4 was the Hillside Estate Winery, where our group was to have a tour and lunch. I was quite

pleased to note the signs which said the cherries were free for the picking – just don't fall off the ladder. Given my appreciation for fresh fruit, I quickly climbed up the ladder and reached for the top of the tree, which was loaded with cherries. Let me tell you, store bought cherries can't compete with those that go straight from the tree into your mouth – were they ever good!!

After a handful of cherries, I went into the wine shop and had a chat with one of the ladies working there, during which I discovered the tours didn't start until 12:15 P.M. I had arrived at 9:45, it was now only about 10:00, and I had no intention of hanging around for over 2 hours for the tour. So, I sampled a few wines, bought four bottles (2 Cabernet Franc and 2 Chardonnay = C\$60.00) and prepared to head out. The ladies in the wine shop wondered how I was going to carry four bottles on my bike, but I assured them I had lots of room, as I was pulling a trailer. Actually, the space previously taken up by the food I had consumed left space for 6-8 bottles.

Once outside the winery, I noticed John on the trail. He told me he had ended up below the winery and had to climb back up – yecch! Before long, we were joined by more of the group (Peter, Michael and Riley, followed by Velda). After a brief conversation, I left them at the winery and headed into Penticton – and the worst of the ride! The KVR trail in Penticton was sometimes not clearly marked – with numerous crossings of various streets and roads. After a while, I found Fairview Road and made my way to the bike trail along the West side of the channel.

Before long (about 11:30 A.M.), I arrived at our destination – the Shade Tree Campground, and introduced myself to Liz, the proprietor. She seemed a little fuzzy on the details of her conversation with Michael (which took place the previous evening), but it turned out she took good notes and all was well. She explained she had assigned four sites for use by our group, and they were cleaning them up for us. I looked the way she indicated, and somebody was using a large leaf rake to rake up the larger chunks of gravel. This place looked like a sea of sand and gravel, with sites separated only by the numbered picnic tables and the occasional tree! Liz advised me they once had grass, but it all died in the heat. Once I reached the sites, I understood why the grass died – this wasn't a campground, this was a parking lot! I swear there are asphalt surfaces more receptive to a tent peg than that place – sheesh! Anyway, it was to be home for the night, so I set up the Bike 'n Hike to dry.

At 11:45, Donna showed up with the van (and a cooler full of beer on ice) – what a sight for sore eyes! After a hug and a kiss (or ten), we had plenty of opportunity to relax and chat before the rest of the

group showed up. When they did, they were welcomed with an ice cold beer to celebrate their accomplishment. One by one, everyone arrived and set up camp, cleaned up and had a chance to relax. Some of them relaxed earlier and therefore arrived later, but that's what touring is about – enjoying yourself and the company of others.

It became clear there was a consensus not to cook (the temperature was 38 deg. C that day), so we tracked down a few restaurants and used the two vehicles we had to shuttle the various participants to the restaurants.

After dinner, we returned to camp and settled down for the evening. It was tough going to sleep, however, as we were less than 100 meters from a major route through and out of Penticton, so there was no shortage of noise from vehicles. In addition, it was 29 deg. C when we turned in, so there were a lot of open tent flies and sleeping on top of (not in) sleeping bags.

Day Five Summary: 46.88 Km, average speed 15.5 Km/hr (does not include stop at Hillside Estate Winery)

Shade Tree Campground: Good water, flush toilets, showers.

Lessons Learned

1. You don't need a full suspension, or even a front suspension bike to ride KVR – a rigid mountain bike works fine. You do need to make sure it's in good repair and functioning well before you head out. Tires should be at least 1.75" in width (depending upon the weight of the rider and gear) and inflated hard enough to avoid pinch flats, but soft enough to take the edge off the small bumps.
2. Bicycle trailers are both good news and bad. The good news is they have enough room to hold all the stuff you need to take. The bad news is they have enough room to hold a bunch of stuff you don't need to take – so select and pack carefully. The obvious choice in trailers is the Bob Yak, but I was (and still am) very happy with the Burley Nomad – though Burley doesn't recommend it for use "off road". I would agree, as far as a gnarly single track is concerned, but the KVR is more like a gravel road than a trail – most of the time, but not all.
3. The ritual at the end of each day's ride should include checking to ensure all fasteners are tight, and lubing the chain with a good lube. I prefer a dry lube such as White Lightning or Pedro's Ice Wax, as they tend to be self cleaning. If you use a wet lube, you'll also need to figure out how to clean the chain of accumulated crud before you

apply more lube.

4. Cyclists in a large group tend to break into smaller groups of 4-6 people, based upon people that break camp at the same time, ride at the same pace, etc.
5. Touring on gravel is like regular touring – only different! Traffic is rarely an issue, but you can't count on finding many of the amenities you take for granted when road touring. Distances are deceiving, as 50 Km on gravel is probably equivalent to touring 75-100 Km on asphalt.
6. Much of the trail from Midway to Rock Creek is loaded with cattle gates, Texas gates and detours. In addition, sections of trail have also been obliterated or covered up, so unless you're a real purist, I'd suggest one of two options: a) start in Midway and take the highway to Rock Creek; or b) start in Rock Creek.



Riley on Trestle, July 10, 2003

Photo: Brian Fergusson. This photo and others by Brian are posted on the web at:

<http://castanet.net/firepics>

Click on the KVR-Myra Canyon folder, then on the Received 2003-09-04 folder, then on Brian's name.

KVR Vignettes (Penticton to Merritt)

Tamela Friesen

Four kilometres of washboards, famished and hot at 10:45 a.m., we roll into Coalmont focused on lunch. "They'd be happy to serve us," the sign read, "if we were lucky enough to find them open." Dreading what we'd packed, we passed abandoned shack after shack in wild-eyed search for food.

The hotel looked like it was operating, with re-stored paint and windows and a lovely veranda, but it was locked up tight. Resigned to our fate, we unpacked seven-day old raw tortillas and some peanut butter and honey. In search of the bright side we trudged up the porch stairs and welcomed the wooden bench when it happened.

Out of the darkness of the hotel entrance popped two black running shoes. They contained white socks, on white legs, which led to black shorts, and behold, a man, in a chef suit with the hat and everything!

His eyes delighted and smiling broadly, "Ooo, ooh ... are you hungry? Would you like me to make you a nice sandwich, perhaps with some minced meat and vegetables, like fresh cucumber, tomatoes, and sprouts?" He motioned with his fingers in front of his chest, miming the making of the sandwich, "perhaps with a nice dish of fruit on the side," he mirrored gaily to his left, "and a tall glass of milk?" he drew an imaginary glass up out of the air.

There's no camping in Brookmere. In fact, there is no real camping anywhere between here and Merritt. Ach, but there's only 29 people in Brookmere; throw your tent up anywhere when you get there." Our KVR adventure continues to demand flexibility. We ride on, looking for potentials, looking for water.

"Oh, yes, there IS camping in Brookmere, we stayed there last night! You must ride off trail, it's completely unmarked." Giddy hope encourages us forward.

Dirt-turned-mud against our sweat-soaked and weary legs, we find the resort—capital "R" resort—just outside Brookmere at 6 p.m. after a twenty-kilometre, washboard-laden end run. Gate locked, "NO TRESSPASSING". It was too beautiful not to snoop. Gorgeous log cabins, a swimming pool, cute resort office, locked posh washrooms, vistas beyond imagination and not a soul

to find.

Weak with hunger, parked outside the gate cooking supper as we pondered our next action, the annoying buzz of a three wheeler draws near. Jeff, a local man in sweat-drenched work clothes, greets us as his cigarette dances on his lips. "You must 'av missed 'im ... he's a weekend guy ... probably left this morning back to Vancouver." He receives the stare reserved for bearers of bad news.

"You're welcome to pitch your tent in Brookmere, next to the fire pit by the creek. There's no toilet, but I could give you a couple jugs of water." He buzzed off down the mountain back to Brookmere. Then it happened.

A man and his son returned from the local swimming hole! They threw all our gear and ourselves on the back of the truck! They told us to set up anywhere! They opened ALL the buildings for us to use or look in as we pleased! They let us into the almighty washroom...with the richest shower you can imagine!

Cheeks stretch back against your ears. Eyes water. Helmets begin to lift off the back of your head. Wind depresses your chest. Fat, deflated tires, apply the brakes, sit up in the wind. Even so, you speed down the mountain at 65 kph and rising. Imagine what you could do on this marble-like black top into Merritt on a road bike!

"Do you want a Coke?" an angel, relaxed on a lawn chair, overlooking the spectacular Cold Water River valley, next to another angel, relaxed on a lawn chair, caressing a plate of fresh fruit and cheeses shouts out to us in our screaming descent. We can break for that.



Tamela, Velda & John on KVR, July 2003

Photo Karen Hardy

Tamela & Karen's KVR Stats

	KM	Cycle Time	KPH	Start-Time	End Time	Trip Time	Rest Time	TT-KPH	Start-Elevation	End Elevation	Plus/Minus
Midway - Beaverdell	73.57	5:42	12.91	8:30	18:30	10:00	4:18	7.36	580	787	207
<i>Swam, 20 km of highway detours, John sagged at Paul's</i>											
Beaverdell - McCulloch	56.43	5:12	10.85	8:12	17:30	9:18	4:06	6.07	787	1270	483
<i>Rode with John, Velda, Peter, swam again.</i>											
McCulloch - Chute	51.22	4:01:17	12.74	8:40:00	15:35	6:55	2:53	7.41	1270	1191	(79)
<i>Trestles, downhill, lots of sand</i>											
Chute - Penticton	51.07	3:01:34	16.88	7:30:00	15:30	8:00	4:58	6.38	1191	341	(850)
<i>Big downhill, lots of tunnel, rock ovens, scenery to see, winery</i>											
Penticton - Thirsk	62.46	5:47:42	10.78	5:02:00	13:02	8:00	2:12	7.81	341	1095	754
<i>Very focused, Summerland-Faulkner an 8" crusher dust disaster</i>											
Thirsk - Princeton	58.71	4:21:55	13.45	10:10	17:00	6:50	2:28	8.59	1095	648	(447)
<i>Mostly downhill, tried to go slower</i>											
Princeton - Brookmere	67.87	5:47:10	11.73	7:40	17:34	9:54	4:06	6.86	648	962	314
<i>Mostly uphill, 2-hr lunch at Coalmont</i>											
Brookmere - Merrit	50.55	2:44:06	18.48	11:00	14:30	3:30	0:45	14.44	962	567	(395)
<i>15 km trail, rest highway - nice ride</i>											
Totals:	471.88	36:37:44				62:27:00	25:49:16				
Averages:	58.985	4:34:43	12.88	8:20:30	16:08:52	7:48:22	3:13:39	7.56			
High:	73.57	5:47:42	18.48	11:00:00	18:30:00	10:00:00	4:58:26	14.44			
Low:	50.55	2:44:06	10.78	5:02:00	13:02:00	3:30:00	0:45:54	6.07			

Total Elevation Gains 1758

Total Losses (1771)

The Great Annual Saskatchewan Pedal

Cam Stephen

Every week or two, I would check the SCA web page to see if there was anything new. Every time the Great Annual Saskatchewan Pedal would catch my eye. I would reread the information and look at the map. I was interested in taking part but really did not feel that I had the cycling experience.

I posted a message on the Saskatoon Cycling Club discussion page to see if anyone had any information about this type of event. Fortunately, Marion Perry took the time to answer some of my questions. I decided that I had to register for this event since this would probably be my last chance to try something like this before winter arrived.

Friday afternoon I made my way to Good Spirit Lake Provincial Park. I arrived much later than I had planned and was not sure where to find anyone else. With the help of the Camp Host, I met up with Marion, Ron, and Velda. They had arrived a short time earlier and were still in the process of setting up camp.

Saturday morning all the participants gathered for a pre-ride meeting. This was the first chance for everyone in the group to meet. Marion, Ron, Velda and Bob from Regina. Dennis and his two sons, David and Daniel, and myself from Saskatoon. Tamela and Karen from Winnipeg (formerly of Regina). Two more riders from Moose Jaw had signed up, but were unable to attend. Every rider received a map of the routes that we would follow over the next three days and the general plan for the weekend events was discussed.

The plan was to depart from camp at 9 am, and we were a little behind schedule. Just as we were preparing to depart, Tamela got the first flat of the tour. She had been putting a little air into her tires when the valve stem came off the inner tube. Within a few minutes, Tamela and Karen had this minor setback fixed and the group was ready to go.

We headed out of the campground to the highway. It was a beautiful sunny morning with virtually no wind. The route started east along Hwy 229 and then south on Hwy 9 to Yorkton. The group met at the Imperial 400 hotel in Yorkton for lunch. After lunch, the route took us northwest to Springside along Hwy 16 and then north up Hwy 47 back to the campground.

Unfortunately, Saturday night I had to visit family in Yorkton and did not get a chance to spend time around the campfire and get to know everyone else in the group and take part in the bannock experiment.

The second day found us travelling south on Hwy 47 back to Springside, then northwest to along Hwy 16 to Theodore. From Theodore we had to travel north on the 651, this was the only gravel section on the route. Luckily, by following the tire tracks we were able to stay on a hard packed surface. This portion was quite easy even for the bikes equipped with the skinnier road tires. At the end of the gravel and there was a short section of pavement into Whitesands Regional Park. This was the worst pavement of the entire tour. It was so rough; that I think everyone would have preferred to be on gravel the whole way. Whitesands has a small restaurant and lunch was ready as soon as we arrived. Thanks to Bob for warning them that we were coming. Whitesands is a scenic, quiet park and was a perfect spot to take a lunch break. The restaurant had several picnic tables outside with numerous trees to provide plenty of shade. Some relaxed while others went to explore a bit.

The route back to Good Spirit Lake was the exact reverse of the route we had used to get to Whitesands. Marion and Ron (of Regina) started first. Marion had just finished the gravel section and had entered the town of Theodore when a thorn managed to puncture her rear tire, the second flat of the tour. Ron and Marion stopped on the side of the road to take care of this minor glitch in the day's plans. They could not have picked a nicer spot to take care of the flat. They stopped under a row of large shade trees. As each of us caught up to them, this gave us a chance to take a short break and lay on the grass in the shade. I think we all were debating whether or not we could fit in a quick nap. Ron had the tire fixed a ready to go in what seemed like no time. Once again, we were on the road again.

Somewhere between Theodore and Springside, Tamela had the third and final flat when a piece of wire pierced her tire.

Sunday evening the group went for dinner at the golf course. Tamela and Karen brought their photos from the Kettle Valley Railway trip that they had done earlier in the summer with the Wascana Freewheelers.

Day three had the group travelling east on Hwy 229, and then north on Hwy 9 to Canora. The tour arrived at the Canora railway museum where we each received a free sample of the best municipal water in Canada, 4th in the world. From here, everyone set out in the search of lunch. Several of the restaurants were closed. The locals all seemed to be eating at one of the Chinese restaurants. Half of the group had a giant feast of Chinese food, those of us looking for a slightly lighter meal settled on sandwiches. Everyone enjoyed their meal at this restaurant.

From Canora we followed Hwy 5 east to Veregin and finished the tour at the National Doukhobour Heritage Village. Here we spent our final hours touring the various buildings that had been part of the Doukhobour settlements, and looking at various artifacts and pictures.

Throughout the three days, we were fortunate enough to have wonderful weather. The days were sunny and warm but not too hot to make cycling uncomfortable. The winds were usually favorable and even when they were not, they were never bad enough to lower anyone's spirits. The routes had been well chosen, the highways that had no shoulder had very little traffic and the roads were in good shape. The highways that had heavier traffic had wider shoulders that were also in good shape. The roadways were relatively flat with some sections of rolling hills.

Our routes took us past brilliant yellow fields, bright green grasslands, and rich green-forested areas. We had crossed several creeks and passed a few ponds. Along the way, we passed a vast array of domesticated animals and wildlife. There were cows, sheep, bison, deer, squirrels, and numerous types of waterfowl and birds of prey.

Prior to signing up for GASP 2003, I had been worried about the distance and pace for one of these tours. I was concerned with the type of attitude the other riders might have had. What I found when I got to GASP 2003 was that it was just a group of people with a vast range of ages and cycling experience, but there were no egos or attitudes. It was just a group of people that just wanted to be out riding their bicycles, enjoying the sights and sounds found along the way. Each person set their own pace, riding solo or in small groups sharing stories about other rides. The sag wagon was always close at hand with a supply of water, juices, fruit, and other snacks.

Special congratulations to Daniel and David, the youngest riders of the tour. These two young men seemed to be working twice as hard to cover the same ground as the rest of us. Their determination and desire to ride the entire distance was impressive.

I would also like to thank Marion Perry for giving me the final push I needed to go out and register for this event. Had it not been for her, I would not have had three of the best days of riding I have had this season. I would not have had the opportunity to meet this group of interesting people.

To any one that has been thinking about taking part in an event similar to this or is considering getting involved in bicycle touring I would highly recommend

taking part in GASP 2004, or any other similar event put on by the SCA next year. You will have an opportunity to take part in a supported tour where at any time you can hop on the sag wagon and take a break. You will meet a other riders who are only interested in the enjoyment of the ride, but are willing to help out a novice with maintenance, and pass along tips and advice that they have gained over the years. Although there were a few small hitches in the weekend plans, the whole experience was positive and very enjoyable. I look forward to riding with all those who participated in this tour again in the future.



SCA Van at GASP 2003

Photo: M. Perry