



The Great Escape: 2016 Edition

Once again, it at first looked like the weather was going to put a damper on our riding, but – once again – we managed to dodge the bullet and enjoyed three glorious days of cycling in south central Pennsylvania's beautiful Cumberland Valley. The second annual Greencastle Great Escape drew a 50 percent increase in registered riders over the previous year, with many new faces among the participants.

The additional participants weren't the only thing that was new. The Martin's Mill covered bridge had been re-opened, and several cue sheets were changed to give riders a chance to cross this historic bridge. Two eateries – Foot of the Mountain Restaurant and Windy Knoll Farm Market & Creamery – were also added to the cue sheets.

On Friday, our first day, we had gorgeous weather – sunny skies, temperatures in the low 80s, light winds – and, as we did last year, we all chose to ride either the long or short version of the “Strawberries and Cream” ride past the Country Creek strawberry fields to Trickling Springs Creamery where you can get ice cream made from the milk of “happy, grass-fed cows raised on family farms.” (They also have soft pretzels to die for!) That evening we met informally at the Greencastle Café del Sol.



On the road to Mercersburg



At Martin's Mill Bridge

Saturday's weather forecast called for temperatures rising into the 90s, followed by afternoon thunderstorms. We decided to take a chance and ride anyway. Most of us chose one of two routes that would take us to lunch at a convenience store in St. Thomas – one by way of Edenville and a longer, more difficult route that passes the site of the 1756 Fort McCord massacre. As it turned out, those on the shorter ride had a much tougher ride due to an error on the cue sheet by yours truly. A few other riders chose a new ride to Windy Knoll. Michael and Evie Reinsel hosted a well-attended happy hour in their room at the Comfort Inn (which yours truly missed because he was busy correcting cue

sheets and checking others for errors!), and we all met for dinner that evening at The John Allison Public House.

On Sunday the forecast called for high winds out of the west, with wind speeds rising above 20 mph and gusting to over 40 by early afternoon. One group of riders chose to do the “Just in Time” ride to the square in Mercersburg, which would give them a tail wind on their return. Another group rode to Foot of the Mountain restaurant in Cove Gap before returning by way of Fort Loudon. The latter ride was actually rather nice – much of the route was in the lee of Cove Mountain, which shielded us from heavy cross winds from the west, and after Fort Loudon we had a brisk tail wind for the ride back.

Like last year's Great Escape, it was a great weekend of riding and socializing and a great way to meet new friends. And, fortunately, nobody came into contact with Giant Hogweed or Cow Parsnip sap (see Lydia's article on the BBC homepage).

Phil Manger



Evie, Michael, Walt and Gene at Ft. Loudoun replica