

Cycling in Nova Scotia

by Katrina Schroeder

As I crank my legs up the hill on my Trek 1100 road bike, sweat swimming down my face, I ask myself, “Why am I doing this???” Then I glance up and see bald eagles soaring, and look down to find whales playing in the beautiful ocean. These are the memories that I have from biking along the Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

There were a total of 23 people on this rather small ride around the Island, but it provided for a close atmosphere where everyone was comfortable talking and socializing with each other. The ride was run by a one-man operation called “Atlantic Canada Cycling.” He puts out seven rides a summer including a rally. Our trip started in Port Hawkesberry where we had a “party” the night before the ride started. After I got over the shock of how few people there were (I was used to rides with at least a couple hundred people on them), it was fun. With only a couple of people from Canada, the ride was mostly Americans from places like Vermont, Mississippi, and Connecticut. The first two days weren’t bad. There was no food provided (no rest stops), so we got used to stocking up on oak cakes (a Scottish specialty) along the way.

The third day we had a warning as to what would be coming later that week. We went up a mountain called “Kelly’s Mountain.” It wasn’t too bad, and for those of us who hadn’t trained very much, it was good practice. That night we ate a group dinner of mussels and corn, cooked on the beach by Nathan, the guy driving the gear truck. The camp site was right on the ocean, so we had a great view and after dinner a guy named Ray built a bonfire on the rocky beach.

The fourth day we went up Mt. Smoky. There was a great view from the top, as well as a bunch of motorcycle riders who were laughing at me because I was so red and out of breath. I’ve decided now that it was worth it, though at the time I had never climbed anything as hard, and was not sure that I wanted to ever climb something like that again. Lucky for my dad, who wanted to me to stay, it was a long way home. The day after we had a sort of a break day, with only hills, no mountains. But the 6th day was the killer.

The night before the big day one of the riders was reading the preview for the day from a packet we had all received before the ride. Apparently

we had all skipped over that page when we decided to sign up! It talked about tough, challenging mountains, three all together. When the day came we were all up and on the road earlier than usual, anticipating the hot long day ahead. It was a physically trying day, but seeing whales and a moose made up for how much my legs hurt that night. The last two days weren’t bad, and when the eight days were over I was glad that I had done all of the climbs, seen all the great wildlife, and met all of the great people whom I hope to keep in touch with. ♦



The author’s father in one of his more customary poses.



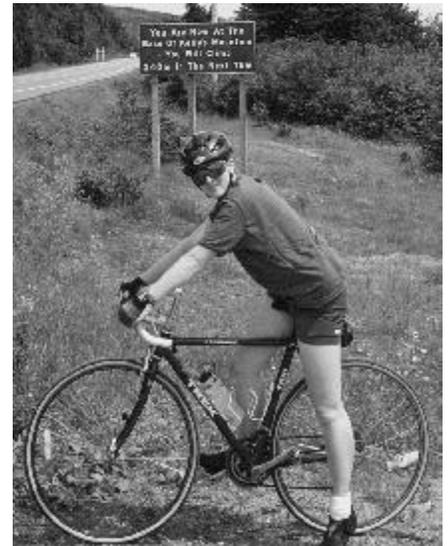
The author at some desceptively flat spot in Nova Scotia

Itinerary for Nova Scotia:

7/23/00	Port Hastings to Whycocomagh	51.2 miles
7/24/00	Whycocomagh to North Sydney	65.8 miles
7/25/00	North Sydney to St Ann's Bay	34.5 miles
7/26/00	St Ann's Bay to Ingonish	42.8 miles
7/27/00	Ingonish to Cape North	34.8 miles
7/28/00	Cape North to Cheticamp Island	53.7 miles
7/29/00	Cheticamp Island to Inverness	38.7 miles
7/30/00	Inverness to Port Hastings	54.4 miles
Total.....		375.9 miles



Katrina (16 years old at the time) and her friends started driving in Columbia, Maryland, and managed to drive about 2,500 miles before they were done. The bike route was a counter-clockwise circuit starting in the southwest at Port Hastings.



The tour around the Cape Breton Peninsula can get to be quite rugged at times. The sign warns Katrina of a 3.5% grade during the next 7 km., though there are many longer and steeper ones on that route.

