

Heart-to-Heart



SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Saturday – October 19, 2023

Mt. Vernon Canyon Club 24933 Club House Circle Golden,
Colorado Cash bar opens @ 11:30 AM; Buffet starts @ 12
noon \$35.00 per person, Members or Guests

“Presidents Spin”

Mark Lestikow

Let's face it: one reason we sign up for HeartCycle tours is so we can share “war stories” with fellow cyclists at SAG stops or over a soda pop!

“The head winds were unbelievable.”

“I got drenched and had to hide out in a chicken coop waiting for the Sprinter to pick me up!”

“15% grades. I was out of the saddle for over a mile!”

One of my favorite war stories happened on the first HeartCycle ride I went on with my wife, Polly, many, many years ago. The “Heart of Colorado” tour started at a dirt parking lot in Golden, Colorado at the base of Golden Gate Canyon Road. We were heading to Estes Park. It was about 98 degrees at 7:00 am...heading to 105. Some gentleman -- I think he was the SAG driver -- handed us a cue sheet and told us to have fun.

The food at all SAG and lunch stops consisted of bananas, peanut butter, jelly, and a loaf of bread, Fig Newtons, and some sort of electrolyte powder for our water bottles. I was so exhausted and dehydrated at the last SAG stop that I added enough powder to my water bottle that it took on the consistency of Jello. Thank God for Don Stevens whose treasure trove of jokes kept me laughing!

I would have made a comment about the food selection, but we didn't even meet our tour leader until day three! I must admit that I questioned Polly's sanity for signing us up for this "adventure," but we ended up having a marvelous time, the riding was amazing, I collected lots of war stories, and we met many wonderful people that have become lifelong HeartCycle friends.

As I was re-telling this story for the umpteenth time at a lunch stop at a lovely park during the recent Paso Robles Wine Country tour, I was sitting on a very comfortable camp chair, chomping on a thick deli sandwich (made by yours truly) loaded with sliced meats, tomatoes, lettuce, and pickles, munching on a pasta salad (lovingly made by one of our SAGs) and BBQ chips, sipping on my Coke Zero, and making sure I saved room for homemade cookies, compliments of one of our riders.

You can guess where I'm going with this: The HeartCycle experience has come a long way over these many years! Past and present board members, working members, tour leaders, and SAGs have worked tirelessly to provide great and memorable tours, while evolving our approach to meet our members' changing tastes. I like to think we now offer "Pampered Tours" without the "Pampered Price Tag"!

This is not to say we don't have expectations of club members during tours. Helping load/unload luggage, ice chests, chairs, bicycles, offering to help SAGs with some of their duties, etc. We've all helped fellow riders with flat tires, scraped up knees and encouraged them to "ride on"! I look at these unspoken duties as a fun way to build a sense of camaraderie and community, both of which help make HeartCycle more than just a bike club.

As we continue to fine-tune the HeartCycle model, I find it helpful to think about where we fit in a crowded market, and what sort of rider we are looking to serve. For instance, after a recent Backroads trip down the Danube (which we thoroughly enjoyed), I realized that our riders don't need or expect the level of pampering offered by the more expensive, for-profit tour companies. And, while I haven't ridden a tour with another cycling club (I'm loyal, if nothing else!), many members have told me the overall experience they receive from HeartCycle tours is second to none.

Happy riding this summer and bring a lot of Coke Zero because you'll need the energy (per my granddaughter Evelyn)!

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Laura Davis (970) 581-1361	(2024)
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Barry Siel (303) 434-1947
Newsletter Editor

Tour Director Musings

Summer has arrived and the heat is on with afternoon thunderstorms and early morning rides. Time to head to the mountains!

The Tour Directors are working feverishly on three spring 2025 international tours. We are gathering information to price these tours and hope to published them on the website by late July. We are planning to open registration for these 3 tours in early August. Most of our 2025 tours will be announced at the annual meeting on October 19th and registration will be late October for the majority of our 2025 offerings. It is not too late to work with us if you want to lead a tour next year, but the Sprinter availability is limited. Contact us soon.

Hope to to see you on the road soon,

Judy Siel, Tour Director

Balkan Quartet – Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro

By Nic Bax

Twenty cyclists from Colorado and around the globe gathered in Tirana, Albania in May for HeartCycle's first Balkan Quartet tour, led by Lisa Evans. Albania, until 1991, was the most severe communist dictatorship, continuing Stalin's brutality and later accusing both the Soviet Union and China of recidivism. In the last 30 years Albania has opened to the world with a program of rebuilding, modern architecture and public education to introduce the Albanian people to a world from which they had effectively been shielded from since WWII. There has been an exponential rise in tourism which HeartCycle cyclists were excited (and just a little apprehensive) to be part of. We are told that modernization is moving at a much slower pace outside the capital.



Thus, it was with some trepidation the next day that we drove out of Tirana into the highly contoured countryside. After bikes, saddles and pedals were fitted, we enjoyed a pleasant ride along the shore of Lake Ohrid to lunch. We then crossed into North Macedonia, and after briefly making an offering at the Monastery of Saint Naum, began our main climb of the day, a modest 300m. From the top it was downhill under circling paragliders, past a reconstructed pre-historic village and our first real traffic of the day, to our lakeside hotel in Ohrid - town of 365 churches and Ohrid pearls. Lake Ohrid itself is one of Europe's oldest lakes and largest biological reserves with 212 identified endemic species.



On that first day, and most days thereafter, we were treated to spring's display of beautiful roadside wildflowers and multitudes of birds singing their unfamiliar but beautiful songs. We would have cool temperatures and rain, and some very warm days in lower elevations. Everything was green-green-green!

We started our second day with a brief tour of Ohrid old town, claimed as the world's longest continuously inhabited town, including a Greek theatre, repurposed by the Romans for gladiator fights. We then set off along the lake and continued through the gorge carved by its only exit river, the Black Drin. After three punchy little climbs and some glorious views along the gorge, we

Continuing our steady 5% climb through the Black Drin gorge, the next day we entered the Mavrovo National Park and enjoyed cycling through impressive wooded slopes and a rushing river, ending at the ski-village of Mavrovo, where isolated patches of snow dotted higher slopes. For some, a circumnavigation of the lake provided an extra challenge to end the day. For others, there was a short walk to "town" and a comparison of a Macedonian ski resort to a Colorado one.



We cycled into Kosovo the next day with a steady 340m climb, a taster for the major climb of the day after a lunch looking at the pass we were set to climb. The 24 km 900m climb started well but ended in a thunderstorm. Some lucky cyclists encountered hailstones while others chose discretion over valor and opted for the sag van. After a few hours watching the continuing storm and consuming hot tea, we chipped in to hire a bus for the 26 km descent - a good choice as we found the road surface had been recently ripped off to prepare for resurfacing.

The next day was a rest day. After a city tour of Prizren, illustrating the many layers of invasion and religion dating from at least the third century, we took a bus to Peja close to a border crossing into Montenegro, only recently opened to the public to support sports and tourism. We could see the tall mountains rising directly west of Peja. Covid, first detected a couple days before, was recognized as widespread (7/20) in the group. A cold started to circulate providing some competition for immune system responses.



We rode by large van out of Peja to the Kosovo border and then cycled the 10k of no-man's land to Montenegro. It was gorgeous but all uphill (>500m of climbing). After a short and cool descent through some amazing scenery - we could be in Switzerland if it weren't for the minarets- we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and proceeded up another climb. Garmin tells us that it is >360m and the gradient ahead increases to 15%, until we duck through a 1km long tunnel 100m below the summit that Garmin has not accounted for. Cycling in the tunnel is not particularly pleasant but it is soon over and we have a long descent to Berane on the river Lim.

Out of Berane, there is only one climb today on the way to Kolasin, a ski area town for the resort of the same name 8km away. An 850m gentle climb with an amazing coffee stop halfway. Lovely views to not-so-distant mountains made us wonder what next days have in store. No more of this Montenegro flat says Junid. We went through two more tunnels with Tani (our sag driver, bike mechanic, and all-around support guy) riding shotgun in van to keep truckers off our tails.



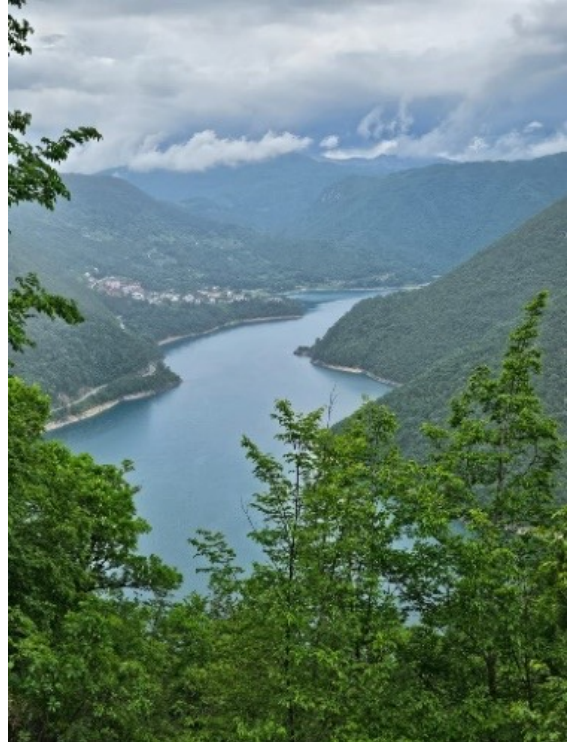
Carbo-loading at a 200-yr old, still functioning, water-powered granary (kacamak - potato polenta with cream and cheese - was my choice) prepared us for next day's largest elevation gain of the trip: 1333m over 74 km. A beautiful ride in the morning along the Tara Gorge was followed after lunch (goulash!) by only a 560 steady climb with rain awaiting prior to arrival at the ski area region of Zabljak. Our lodge overlooked the ski area in the distance about 6km south of town.



The ride from Zabljak to Pluzine is possibly the most spectacular ride most of us have done - through the Montenegro high country of Durmitor National Park. Unfortunately, with an 85% chance of up to 5mm rain, low temperatures, and a long descent, we saw it from the inside of a van (plus photo stops) and spent a leisurely afternoon at Lake Piva.

We breakfasted next to lake Piva in lovely sunshine before launching into two nice climbs of 350m with views of the lake and surrounding countryside. Following a coffee break we finished the ride with a long descent, mostly missing a rain/hailstone shower, and mostly surviving roadwork to end the day at lunch. We travelled by van to a previous capital of Montenegro - Cetinje - in preparation for what promised to be a spectacular finale to the trip.

Our final day of riding was a gentle 38km to return to Albania. It followed a bus ride, where we were shaken but not stirred (a James Bond movie was filmed here!) along the spectacular but not very bike-friendly Montenegro coast. A last chance for gelatos in Shkodër, with bus transfers to the airport (home) or port (onwards) the next day arranged well by our guide.



And the food. An abundance and diversity. From the numerous fresh salads, roasted vegetables, fresh ripe tomatoes and 'tapas style' mains in the lowlands of Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo, to the heartier mountain food (read: meat and potatoes) of Montenegro, there was something for everyone or our guide Junid would work something out. Everyone was actually happy, food-wise, to get back to Albania and the generous portions of many vegetables, chicken and fish.

People everywhere were friendly and helpful. In Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo, English was widely spoken among those working in the tourist industry, particularly by young people. In Montenegro, we often used Google Translate and hand gestures to communicate, mostly successfully! So many places were off the beaten tourist track, that we felt like we really got to see people in their everyday lives. Until Kotor... where there were 3 cruise ships in port on our final rest day, and a major tourist scene! That was a bit of culture shock.

Cycle Albania has been in business for 11 years with most guides, drivers and support staff part of an extended family. They run three trips in the Balkans – UNESCO Southern Albania, the 4-country Balkans (this one) and a less frequent shorter one in the north of Albania featuring longer climbs (the Accursed Mountains.) At the time of our tour, they had 10 trips on the road - 80% for German speakers. The guides are very professional and the service matches that of better-known high-end bike touring companies, given that a 4-star hotel is not of the same quality in economies recovering from communism as in Europe in general. They are able to keep their prices low by the lower cost of food and lodgings, and using less direct support staff as they can rely on a network of external support providers when the need arises.

The bikes are well-maintained Giant hybrids - manual or electric. Rather upright and heavier than a touring bike but serviceable. One couple who brought their own gravel bikes found them ideal for the roads and gradients.



Pedaling Through Paradise: HeartCycle "Springtime in the South Bay Area" Tour

By Doug Dayberry with help from Scott Dayberry



Group along the coastal trail. Photo credit: Carol Fredrickson

Grab your helmets and get ready for an epic cycling adventure! Led by the dynamic duo of Carol Fredrickson and Janet Slate, with the exceptional support crew of Mayoma Pendergast and Kathleen Schindler, the HeartCycle "Springtime in the South Bay Area" tour was a 6-day, 275-mile odyssey through the breathtaking northern California landscape.

Our journey kicked off in Campbell, just a stone's throw from the bustling San Jose airport. At the late afternoon Happy Hour meet-and-greet/logistics meeting, we welcomed four new HeartCycle members from Colorado and Florida into our crew of 21 adventurous cyclists.

Day 1: Conquering Kings Mountain

Undaunted by the Coast Ranges, we embarked on a 52-mile trek with ~3000-ft elevation gain over the serpentine Kings Mountain Road and down Tunitas Creek Road. With elevation grades ranging from 5% to 10%, these routes provided a "great burn" for our legs, and the KOM (King of the Mountain) riders were simply impressive. The descent was an adrenaline-pumping 8 miles of switchbacks and thrills with enclaves of redwoods.

Our reward? A fantastic farm lunch stop with incredible food prepared by Mayoma and Kathleen, and a ride to the picturesque seaside hamlet of Half Moon Bay. Known for the enormous waves of the famed "Mavericks" surf break, we witnessed the rugged coastline carved by these powerful forces of nature. Many of us indulged in a delicious post-ride dinner at Half Moon Bay Brewing Company, making it a perfect start to our week!



Our leaders Carol and Janet at the hotel



Campbell parking lot getting ready for Kings Mountain



Farmstand lunch



Half Moon Bay, note moon!

Day 2: Half Moon Bay to Santa Cruz

Leaving Half Moon Bay in the sea mist, we cycled along the winding Pacific Coast Highway 1, with the Pacific Ocean on our right and the Coast Ranges on our left. The 56-mile coastal route to Santa Cruz included an optional 4-mile detour through San Gregorio and Pescadero, where rolling hills and eucalyptus trees provided new sights at every turn.

Along the way, the iconic Pigeon Point Lighthouse with its white façade offered an outstanding view of the crashing waves below. Once in Santa Cruz, the winding bike lanes treated us to even more breathtaking ocean vistas, with oceanside homes perched on the ledges. Our group dinner at Ideal Bar & Grill was a lively affair, complete with awesome seafood, desserts, drinks, and plenty of laughs shared among friends.



Looking forward down the trail from Half Moon Bay



On the trail leaving Half Moon Bay



"Second" breakfast along the Pacific



Lunch stop along the coast



Our tandem team, Robin and Steve

Day 3: Santa Cruz Rest Day (or Not!)

A well-deserved rest day in Santa Cruz allowed us to experience the town's vibrant surf culture, explore the renowned boardwalk, or simply bask in the sun at the pristine Natural Bridges State Beach or on the over 100-year-old world-famous Santa Cruz Wharf. For the more adventurous souls, optional cycling routes led to Capitola and beyond, all the way to Gizdich Ranch, or out to Corralitos.



Longest wooden pier in North America, Santa Cruz



Rest day riders of the Pacific Coast



Group dinner in Santa Cruz, Photo credit: Mayoma Pendergast

Day 4: Santa Cruz to Campbell (with a Fiery Twist)

Bidding farewell to Santa Cruz, we retraced our path over the Coast Ranges on CA Highway 9, conquering 3,700 feet of elevation gain. An optional route included the Big Basin area, where the stark landscape was dotted with giant redwoods recovering from the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire. It was heartwarming to witness the recent regrowth and resilience of nature.

For those who opted to remain on CA Highway 9, a side trip to Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park offered a glimpse into a redwood grove recovering from a fire over 100 years ago. Once we reached the summit, we enjoyed a 6-mile descent into Saratoga for a creekside lunch before cycling back to our Campbell base.



Big Basin redwoods recovering



Riding through Big Basin and redwoods

Photo credit: Tony Brady



Day 5: Morgan Hill Loop and Winery Delights

A 58-mile jaunt along the eastern flank of the Coast Ranges led us to Morgan Hill, home of Specialized and the Specialized Racing Team. While there, we indulged in lunch at Guglielmo Winery, complete with a group sampling of their delightful ros . A novelty Almond Champagne was also on the menu, adding a touch of whimsy to our day.

Despite the gentle 1,600-foot elevation change, we faced a gnarly headwind—BOTH WAYS! But hey, that's all part of the fun, right? It was a great chill day before tackling the Mount Hamilton climb.



Another fantastic "second" breakfast on the road



Carol and James enjoying the ride!



All lined up at Guglielmo Winery



The Wine Tasting Team in full force

Day 6: Summiting Mount Hamilton, 64 miles, 5600 feet

The tour reached its epic finale with an iconic climb to the summit of Mount Hamilton, a rite of passage for cyclists in the South Bay Area. Crossing the Silicon Valley, we ascended alongside fellow cyclists, ultimately reaching Lick Observatory shrouded in fog. The three-tiered ascent provided HeartCycle tour members with a challenging day, complete with cool, wet pavement and a knuckle-whitening, chilly descent back to the warmth of the Silicon Valley and our Campbell base hotel.



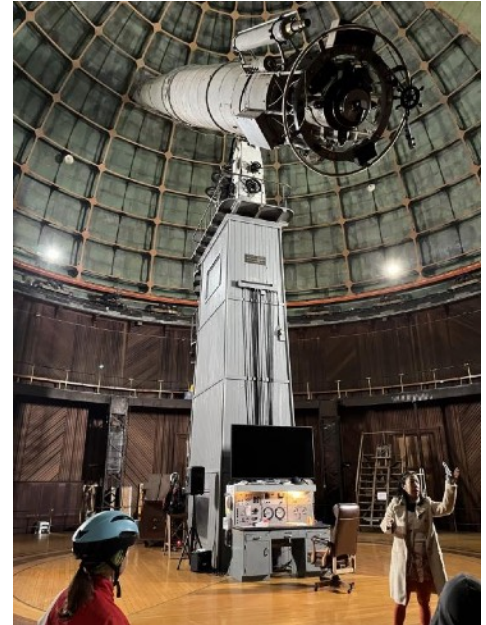
Mt. Hamilton fog climb



Roger and Kevin climbing Mt. Hamilton.
Photo credit: Tony Brady



Lick Observatory in the fog at 4200 feet



And the telescope inside

As the sun set on the final day, the HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club bid farewell to the South Bay Area, our hearts and memories filled with enduring friendships thanks to the expertise of our local members, tour leaders, and SAG team. Until the next tour, keep those wheels spinning and cycle on!



**Much appreciation to Mayoma, Kathleen, Janet, and Carol!
And Happy Birthday Kathleen!**

Colorado HeartCycle 2024 Tours

Spring Training in Texas Hill Country

Fredericksburg, Texas

March 15 - 22 Status: Complete
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$1,900.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Tina Vessels, tina.vessels@gmail.com

Springtime in the South Bay Area

Campbell, California

May 19 - 25 Status: Complete
 6 days, Advanced \$1,900.00
 Carol Fredrickson, swmcarol@yahoo.com
 Janet Slate, jslate@ultrasys.net

Portugal: West Coast & Algarve

Lisbon, Portugal

April 7 - 17, 2024 Status: Complete
 11 days, Intermediate \$4,900.00
 Judy Siel, judy.siel@gmail.com

Explore the Door in '24

De Pere, Wisconsin

June 2 - June 9 Status: Complete
 8 days, Intermediate \$2,000.00
 Jim Bethell, bethell.jim@verizon.net
 Cindy Dore, cdorecycle@gmail.com

Paso Robles Wine Country

Paso Robles, California

April 13 - 20 Status: Complete
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$2,000.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

Bike & Barge Beautiful Belgium

Bruges, Belgium

July 20 - 27, 2024 Status: Closed
 7 days, Easy/Int. \$2,150.00
 Rita Kurelja, ritakurelja@hotmail.com

Underground Railroad Year 1

Mobile, Alabama

April 27 - May 12 Status: Complete
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,840.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net

Basalt & Aspen - Road & Gravel Tour

Basalt, Colorado

July 24 - 28 Status: Closed
 4 days, Int./Adv. \$1,100.00
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net
 Robin Heil, heikrobin1@gmail.com

Balkan Quartet

Tirana, Albania

May 17 - 31, 2024 Status: Complete
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,600.00
 Lisa Evans, lceski@comcast.net

Puget Sound Island Hopping

La Conner, Washington

August 3 - 11 Status: Waitlist
 7 days, Int./Adv. \$2,560.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

