

# Riding Around the Sierra Nevada Roads



Old Clear Creek Road  
March 10th, 2007

The Carson Valley is a large, open, flat valley that sits at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain ranges. There are a lot of climbs (paved and unpaved) that can be explored on a bicycle here. Although the climbs are not necessarily very steep for the most part, they do take you up to some serious altitude. Mount Rose Highway will take the traveller up to 8900+ feet in altitude!



Here is a view of Job's Peak from my driveway. The empty lots across from us have not been built up so we are treated to an excellent view all year!

Highway 395 is actually a very long road that runs several hundreds of miles and cuts through many small towns as well as big cities. It is the main strip through the Carson Valley. Although there is a lot of heavy traffic on it at time, the shoulder is nice and wide for the most part. In some cases, the shoulder is almost 50 feet wide! There's plenty of room for cyclists.

It is almost impossible to go anywhere without getting on Highway 395.



I recently got a Garmin Edge 305. It is one heck of a neat toy! By using the GPS satellites orbiting the Earth, it can track your location, speed, and elevation. It also has the capability to monitor your heart rate. I don't use the heart rate function since I am fortunate to have a PowerTap. When used side by side, a PowerTap and a Garmin will provide almost all the information a cyclist could ever dream of having.



Today's climb was Old Creek Road. It's not a terribly long climb which makes it perfect for the “quick and dirty” training ride. The scenery is beautiful and there are very few cars that ever travel up this road. Of course, the road sits right off of Highway 395 and it is instantly recognizable by the Costco store that sits near the intersection. My official “start” of the climb is just after the Costco store. Here's what it looked like today.



It turns out that someone is building a house about half way up the road. Thankfully the crew is not working on the weekend so it was smooth riding!

The road starts off reflecting the desert climate of the valley but turns green and woody pretty quick. It's almost as if there is some sort of imaginary line drawn between the two areas. There is still some snow on the road where the sun is blocked by the surrounding trees. The road is clear for the most part and there are only a few wet spots from the melting snow. Be aware that the road is not regularly maintained so the surface is rather rough in some spots.



The climb ends at the Clear Creek Youth Center. From what I understand, it is a center for delinquent juveniles and not a “happy-go-lucky” place for kids to enjoy the outdoors.

The gate marks the “end” of the climb. You can almost follow the last 500 meters of the road in the picture below.



The climb turned out to be 4.2 mile long and the Garmin unit recorded the elevation during that climb. Once the recorded ride data was imported into the Garmin Training Center software, the elevation profile of the climb was shown to look like this.



The Garmin Training Center is actually a very simple program that was designed to do nothing more than log the rides and perform some rudimentary analysis. Unfortunately, the data cannot be exported to any sort of text format like the PowerTap software. The only way to analyze the data here is to use the cross hairs and read the numbers manually.

It's a bit hard to see in the screen shot because of the limited size of this file but the road began at 4779 feet and topped out at 5750 feet over the course of 4.2 miles. I have a zoomed-in copy on the next slide.

One neat feature of the Garmin software is the fact that it can plot the course you rode on top of a standard map.

The Garmin unit can segment the ride into a “Lap” and the user must press a button on the unit to indicate a new “Lap”. I suppose it was meant for people who repeated ride a circuit several times during their workout. In my case, a “Lap” marker really indicates a new segment of road.

