

# Combining cycling with wine tasting

By Blair Anthony Robertson, McClatchy-Tribune Newspapers

The rolling hills and the largely quiet country roads in and around Auburn make it one of the most reliable areas for a great cycling experience.

Over the years while riding these roads, we kept noticing the appealing little wineries that have cropped up. Wouldn't it be nice if we could combine two of our favorite things bike riding and wine tasting?

In the Napa Valley, folks from around the world come to rent bikes, follow routes and hop from one great winery to the next. The Placer Wine Trail isn't on that scale yet, but there is a map and a website that promotes the Sacramento-area wines.

In this installment of "Great Rides," we're going to give the activity a try in this emerging wine region. I'm no exercise physiologist, but I know that a sip or two of wine won't interfere with a bike ride of moderate intensity. Wine has plenty of carbs for energy and tastes far better than Gatorade. And you don't have to dress in Lycra from head to toe in order to do this ride. Less conspicuous attire might be more suitable if you plan to stop in at the wineries.

We've mapped out a route of about 25 miles that leads you past four wineries, gives you a good workout, and tests your legs on plenty of gentle hills and one long, steep climb on Baxter Grade on the way to Auburn that is so tough you'll think you've stumbled upon a route suitable for the Tour de France.

If this hill isn't tough enough for you, there's a secret little hill thrown in as an option at the end of the ride.

It's not that long, but it is incredibly steep. If you're not in tiptop shape, you may have to get off your bike and push it up the hill. More on that in a moment.

Of course, no one says you have to cover the entire route by bike. You can tackle some of it as a cyclist and some as a motorist. Or, if you're not into cycling, this route makes for an excellent sightseeing drive.

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