

Cascade 1400 Pre-Rider Notes

This pre-ride report supplements the thorough route description found on the Cascade 1400 web site here: [Route – CASCADE 1400](#)

Riders: Chris Heg, Yonnel Gardes, Keith Moore, Kevin Smith

Support: Gary Cruce, Hugh Kimball (with eye in the sky – Susan Otcenas)

Day 1: “Blissful Ignorance” was the title selected for this chapter of the ride because the route offered so many quintessential pacific northwest views and experiences that you might forget what real challenges that await. We enjoyed quiet early morning riding up to Sequim on empty country roads while the hills opened our lungs and legs. With three big mountain passes on the course profile, the scale of the smaller hills get lost, but you’ll enjoy experiencing every one of them! You will have many hours on the beautiful Olympic Discovery Trail, one of many rail-to-trail gems of the PNW. The first control (Port Ludlow) had warm breakfast sandwiches which work well for eating on the bike. As you approach the Port Angeles area, there is a great reveal of the Strait of Juan De Fuca and Vancouver Island to the north, which should give some perspective of the scale of the region. The pre-riders found some grab and go lunch items in Port Angeles, knowing we still had a long night ahead. Many food options are available on route in Port Angeles. You’ll need to do some climbing to get from the coastline up to beautiful Lake Crescent. You’ll ride a nice ribbon of smooth pavement along the north shore of the lake for what seems like forever. Pre-riders took it a bit slow on the trail because of the views and hikers or families on the trail, exercise good care and trail etiquette. Once away from Lake Crescent, you’ll have the opportunity to move at pace and make time to Forks, where you will want to stop, get food and water, and prepare for the night shift on the remote Hoh Mainline Rd. Hwy 101 will have logging trucks, but they tend to be off the road by 5 or 6 PM, we found the road shoulder to be sufficient for offering space, but always exercise care. Leaving Hwy 101 and the vehicle traffic behind, the Hoh Mainline Rd. offers a real remote temperate rainforest experience. A small elk herd welcomed us at the location of the staffed control, but they didn’t have a pen so we self-certified each other’s brevet card. The penitentiary on the road is a cute touch, keep pedaling. Watch out for short gravel sections and uneven pavement during the descent on the second half of the Hoh Mainline, especially after dark or in low visibility. Back on Hwy 101 – you still have work to do before reaching the overnight control at Amanda Park. Keep going (some) sleep awaits.



Day 2: "Transit day" is a 323 km trek from the west side of the Olympic mountains to the foot of the Cascade Mountains, amazing the distance we can travel on our own power. Pre-riders ate a limited breakfast and left the control at ~6 AM with the reward of a hot breakfast and good espresso in Monsanto (~80km into the day). We stopped at "East Country Roasters" (315 Pioneer Ave W) on route and discovered the owner is a big cyclo-tourist. Fantastic breakfast croissants, timely service, great coffee, fruit, and packable items plus a well-appointed bathroom for you to discover. Event riders will get a different route from the staffed control (141 km into the day) to Packwood because the pre-riders identified route and traffic issues that we wanted you to avoid. But rest assured, you will be traveling well known (to SIR) roads through bucolic south-central Washington to Winlock and Vader, then will head east to Packwood, hopefully Mt Rainier will be out for your view pleasure (locals have not seen her since last November). Hopefully mid-pack riders can make Packwood sometime from 10 to midnight. If you're later than this, stay with it since the Packwood Control doesn't close until 08:24 AM.



Day 3: “The Reckoning” This is what you came for, two servings of mountain passes in one day! Pre-riders rolled out at 6 AM again and it took us 3 hours to climb White Pass. Don’t stress about the clock (yet), there is plenty of opportunity to claw back time coming up. There is a wonderful service station & convenience store at the top of White Pass that will be open with hot coffee, espresso, water, various food items. Stop here and replenish yourself, you earned it. Its hard to say what weather to expect and what to wear in the mountains. But whatever you choose to bring, put it on. There are two descending segments separated by an extended ride along the south side of Rimrock Lake. You’ll have a number of wardrobe changes this day, so think layers and flexibility. Pre-riders elected for just a short stop at the control in Selas as part of our desire to claw back time. You’ll then ride through the amazing Yakima Canyon – which was formed by the land rising (due to plate tectonics), not by the river eroding into the ground (ala the Grand Canyon). We found winds in the canyon to oscillate between tail and head, depending on which curve we were on. It also rained heavily on us here, which was unusual and an omen for conditions ahead. But we’re sure you’ll have a strong tailwind and warm dry conditions. Press on to Ellensburg, where the real challenge of the day awaits. Stop and get yourself some dinner/food in Ellensburg and replenish on-bike supplies for the night ride over Blewett Pass. Pre-riders faced incredibly strong headwinds into Ellensburg and on the road to Blewett Pass. The wind was so strong, that only 1 rider made it up and over the pass. Its hard to say what you’ll experience, but leaving Ellensburg, you are riding toward a wind energy project on Hwy 97, so chances are you’ll have some level of a headwind. Based on pre-rider experience, if conditions are really poor, keep your head in the time ‘game’. The control in Wenatchee doesn’t close until 09:34 AM the next day, so it’s possible for you to stop in Ellensburg, find a place to sleep for a few hours, then roll out at 2 or 3 AM (when winds might lose the daytime heating effects) to climb Blewett Pass. You’d likely make the summit by sunrise and have plenty of time to descend (in daylight) into the Wenatchee control. Sure - it makes for a long 4th day, but the clock is in your favor at this point. Of course, if you can make Blewett Pass without sleeping in Ellensburg, then ‘attack, attack, attack!’ and get yourself some well-earned sleep in Wenatchee.



Day 4: "Methow Meandering" Pre-riders rolled out of Wenatchee around our original plan of 8:30 AM to experience the day as the event riders would. The change of scenery and scale of the landscape versus Day 1 on the Olympic Peninsula is amazing and is part of what makes Washington State unique. We had a wonderful morning ride up to Lake Chelan where we stopped for a short lunch in town. Riding along the mighty Columbia River, we both noticed the Wells Dam rest area (96 km into the day), with its large trees, smooth grass and shade and remarked that it would make the perfect spot for a 'lawn' nap. The service station at the Pateros Control is very nice, grab an ice cream. Welcome to the Methow River Valley, sit back and enjoy the pastoral scenery, unrestrained wild river, and dry conditions. You can get services in the 'wild west' themed Winthrop then have a nice out & back loop in the late afternoon/early evening sunlight, finally working your way up to the overnight control in Mazama. During many parts of the riding to Winthrop and Mazama, you'll have views of the beautiful and ominous North Cascades, where your final adventure awaits!



Day 5: “The Crown Jewels” With the Mazama control closing at 5:40 AM, you will get an early start to the day. For reference, pre-riders left Mazama late (~9:30 AM) and finished the day by 11:30 PM (~2 hours in the bank). We spent plenty of time stopping to take photos, gawking at the beautifully rugged scenery, and generally admiring the most beautiful part of the course. It's best for you to experience the area as opposed to explaining it in words. There is a staffed control atop Washington Pass to refill water, etc. You will want to bundle up for the descents, it's long and fast with good road conditions and sightlines. You might have road construction crews working (as we experienced), so watch for flaggers and follow their instructions. They were using a pilot car to guide vehicles on the sections with only one lane open. They let us ride in front of the pilot car so traffic wasn't pushing us, which was nice. You must stop and take in the views of Diablo and Ross Lake. Water and bathrooms are available in the worker town of Newhalem (96.2km). We stopped for a sit-down dinner in Marblemount at 'Mondo' 119 km into the day (chicken teriyaki, gyoza, rice, yum!). The remainder of the route becomes essentially flat to slightly downhill, combined with some motivation to finish, we suspect your pace will quicken. There was relatively little traffic on 530, but we did notice a few random large trucks hauling woodchips too/from the mill near Darrington, so be mindful. They gave us plenty of room at night. Note the final turns on the cue sheet – you will need to cut through a church parking lot to access the Best Western hotel because of construction. Don't follow the 'Detour' signs – just ride straight to the blocked road and turn right into the church parking lot.

You did it! You're now a finisher of the first 1400 km randonee' ever held in the US!

Side note to any people who decide to DNF (as a few pre-riders did), consider continuing on the course, assuming body and bike are willing. It will rank up there as among the best DNFs ever.

