

Georgia Tandem Rally (GTR) – Athens, GA 2009

My first Tandem Rally

New to the tandem scene, Donna and I are open to new adventures. Susanna bragged about how much fun the Georgia Tandem Rally has been in the seven years they have gone. After looking at their website and browsing the hundreds of photos we decided that we could do this. The longest day is just over 50 miles and Athens is not in the mountains. Suzie also recommended that if I wanted to go, I had better send my application in as fast as possible once it became available. I followed her advice and sent it in express mail. Her advice proved valuable, as we were one of the lucky ones that did get in. The rally was limited to 95 teams and it filled up in two days.

Now that we've sent in the money and booked our hotel room, it's time to get some saddle time in. We don't want to be dropped somewhere out in the boonies of Georgia! Besides, we're committed to three consecutive days of riding. Our first serious prep ride was the After The Bridge Run Ride in Charleston. 70 miles in about 4 hours, we survived, actually had fun. Never saw Team Task, but hey, we're still newbies. A few more rides, the Tailwind Mothers Day ride, and we think we're ready.



Thursday – Leave for Athens

We coordinated with Team Task to leave early afternoon from 2 to 3 PM, time to beat the Charlotte traffic out of town and make to Athens by dinner. Team Task beat us out of town (I got used to them ALWAYS in front). The Inn was a restored Foundry. We got checked in, hooked up with Team Task and walked to town for dinner. We decided on this quaint little Italian place. School was out so things were slow in town. The service was slower, but the food was great and the company was excellent. After the stroll back to the inn we were all ready for a good night's sleep in anticipation of tomorrow's ride.



Friday – Where did these HILLS come from?

Friday's ride was a remote start, meaning we drove about 8 miles out of town to start the ride. Lots of tandems, nice tandems, REALLY nice tandems! We chose the 46 mile option. It was more than 29 but not 61 (need to save the legs a little, we have two more days). We hung with the lead group for the first several miles until we hit the second big hill. That was the last we saw of Team Task that morning. But not to worry, we soon hooked up with three other teams that were quite happy with our pace. Still, lots more hills, but some gorgeous scenery. We passed by old plantation homes,

horse farms, and small communities. We experienced very little auto traffic, just the occasional tractor. When we got back to the start, no Team Task. Hmm, they must have missed the 46 mile turn off. We got back to the Inn about lunch time. So a quick shower, then a short stroll to town and lunch at the Taco Shack. After a little nap we decided to explore the Foundry Park Inn. Donna was quite happy when we found the rocking chairs.

Dinner was on our own tonight, so we decided on the fish place we had passed up last night. We shared our stories with Team Task over excellent food and fast attentive service. Tonight is the GTR Ice Cream Social, so we had our share of ice cream and storytelling with all the other tandem couples. We all MUST wear our name tags, so the environment is very friendly. There are NO strangers there. Since we had tickets to the bar and discount coupons for beer, we headed there. We met new GTR friends and shared more stories.



Saturday – Watson Mill State Park

This is our big day, 52 miles. It looked like rain and within the first mile a few drops fell. But that was it! By now we know who we could ride with so it was not long before we had our group together. Team Task was off the front going for the 66 mile route. After about 8 miles, we see Team Task going the other way! Mmm, guess they missed their turn. We were quite happy when they later joined us “mortals” for the rest of the ride to the covered bridge. Beautiful countryside, not much climbing and NO POTTY until we got to the park! Some photos, a snack, and back on the road. Donna and I rode the first eight miles or so by ourselves just to enjoy the solitude. When the peloton passed, we hopped on. Before long, we were at our lunch stop. A leisurely lunch and a short three mile ride back to the inn and it’s time for a shower.

Donne took advantage of the spa services and went for a massage. I went to the GTR keg party.

The GTR banquet was tonight. The food was excellent and the GTR Organizers (Eve and Roger Strauss) were quite entertaining. There were prizes and awards, lots of laughter and everyone had a great time. No bar tonight, I’m done!



Sunday – Cool Down ride to Nowhere

Yes, there really is a Nowhere Road. Again looks like rain. Some drizzle after the start, but no downpour. We chose the 37 mile option. The group was much more laid back today. Wow, we’re in front of Team Task at the rest stop! I must admit my bravado was put back in its place when they informed me they had a flat tire. The last half of the ride we all pretty much stayed together (our usual group and Team Task). With about 5 miles to go a couple teams came blasting by. It was more than Team Task could take, and poof, they were gone with the hammerheads. A

few miles and a very BIG hill we were back at the inn. After a quick shower and lots of goodbyes, we’re heading back to Charlotte. More food before we hit the road at Gyro Wrap and it was DE-L-icious!



Summary

GTR is a wonderful experience. Everyone we met was super friendly and helpful to us with the tandem etiquette. No matter what your speed, there is a team there faster, slower, and just like you. We met some very special people there I’m sure we will see again. We’re going back next year!

Dwight McKnight
Team McKnight
dmcknight@cmisolutions.com
Posted 6/09