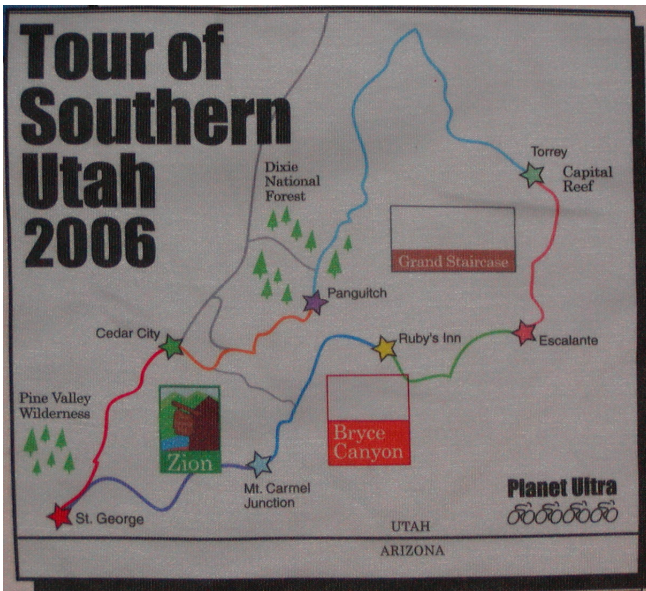


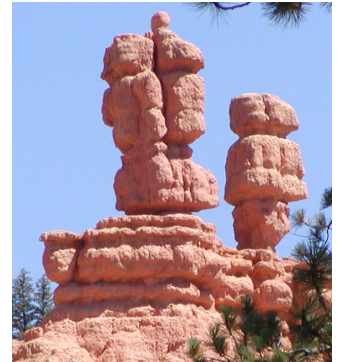
Tour of Southern Utah
Aug. 27 through Sept. 2, 2006
By: Mike McGeough

Karen and I rode around southern Utah with 4 other ACTC members, Lyresa Plescovitch, Jeff Schwening, Osman and Judy Isvan. The tour was arranged by Planet Ultra. We started and ended in St. George. We took a couple of extra days before and after the tour for additional site-seeing. We drove to St. George passing through some of the territory we rode through on the Furnace Creek 508 the year before. We toured the touristy Calico Ghost Town as it was closing and drove by Zzyzx, CA. August is not the time of year to visit here! Riding is okay in this heat since the wind cools the skin.



The start of the first day set the tone for most of the ride. Everyone else on the tour seemed to be in a hurry and pace-lined to Mt. Carmel Junction. One couple was racing so fast they missed the turn off to Zion National Park! We certainly wouldn't miss that ride. There is no traffic in Zion. Everyone without a special pass has to take the park buses to any location inside the park. We has special bicycle passes! We took our time and enjoyed the deep canyons and breathtaking vistas of Zion National Park. No time for hiking or swimming, so a liesurely bike ride had to satisfy us. After leaving the park we snaked up the mountain and had to wait for a SAG to transport us through a long up hill tunnel and on to Mt. Carmel Junction. Day 2 had us ride through the red Red

Canyon to Bryce National Park where the 6 of us too a short hike to view the Hoodoos. There was an optional out and back to the end of the road for those not getting enough miles. We decided to spend the time enjoying the sights at a more relaxed pace-walking. Day 3 took us to Escalante. We spent much of the day riding with Mr. California Triple Crown, Chuck



Bramwell as part of a pace line to cover much of the early miles. The miles passed quickly and gave us an opportunity to ride off route and visit the Escalante Petrified Forest and take a swim. Day 4 took us to Torrey, UT, in the Capital Reef National Park. On the way we had the opportunity to tour the Anasazi museum where they are excavating an ancient indian village. We also tangled with a giant bull, (yes-a bull, not a steer), in the middle of the road. Jeff and Karen were much bolder than I was in passing the bull. I had a bit more respect for the monster. There was an optional out and back ride from the hotel to see the rest of the paved road in the park. We rode an extra 20 miles or so and took several photos. We decided not to ride the whole route since there was lots of climbing involved and we had 80 miles and about 8000' of climbing on the day as it was. The 5th day was 105 miles but much flatter than the others. We fought some headwind but had a very enjoyable day with views for miles all around. Then came the big climb. On the 6th day we rode from Panguitch to



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Cedar City. On the way we climbed over Cedar Breaks which summits at 10,350 ft. It rained most of the way up the mountain. As we climbed higher, the temperature continued to drop. When we got to the observation point everyone was huddled inside covered with trash bags. It was about 45



degrees, raining hard with occasional hail falling on us. I waited at the top for everyone to decide what they were going to do. Most of the people SAGged down to Cedar City. I didn't want to lose the 35 mile descent, so I braved it and rode down. My hands were numb and I was shaking so violently I had troubles controlling my bike. I stopped every couple of miles to "warm up." After about 10 miles I was able to remove my jacket. Then my hat. Then my arm and leg warmers. By the time I got to the bottom it was over 100 degrees! I was completely dry and sweating. It went from cold 45 degree rain and hail to a sunny 105 degrees over the course of a 35 mile descent. It was worth it. The scenery at Cedar Breaks and the route down the mountain

was awesome. I think I am the only one that rode down the mountain. I got a good tour of Cedar City since the hotel address was wrong on the route sheet. This gave me a chance to heat up enough for a dip in the pool. The last day was spent returning to St. George. Brian and Deb of Planet Ultra pulled a pace line most of the way. We got dropped by the rest of the gang at a rest stop on account of an abandoned kitten that Karen planned to box up and bring home. Instead of keeping it, she found a home for it at the local gas station. We met up with Osman and Judy as we entered the stunning Snow Canyon. It is covered with volcanic lava which looks as new as that in Hawaii but is supposedly over 1000 years old. The pitch black lava spreads out over the bright red sandstone which covers most of Utah. We were able to talk Judy and Osman into some "real" touring. We rode around a golf course and stopped to tour an open house. The new house was built right on the lava flows. It was spectacular! A few miles further down the road brought us to the end of the tour. We had a nice Mexican dinner and said our goodbyes to all our new friends. Karen and I were not done yet though. We spent a couple of days touring the Grand Canyon and more of the desert on the way back to San Jose.