

Bike Tour to Birds Landing

By Vic Thiry and Tom Surh

This unique tour can be made in a car, but it is particularly suited for bicycling as it goes over lightly used roads through a landscape better seen up close. From downtown Rio Vista, it is 14 miles to the tiny town of Bird's Landing. This route has no shade for the first 8 miles, so it is best to go on a cooler day or in the morning. Even if you do not make it all the way out, a ride into the Montezuma Hills is very worthwhile for its rolling landscape in the otherworldly mix of high tech wind turbines, historic structures and equipment and ranching scenes (mostly sheep and some goats).

Starting at Main and Second Streets, head south on Second past the Library, past the beautifully restored house at Second and Bruning known as Captain Larsen's home. Continue south until just past the Delta Marina where the road splits, turning left to Beach Drive and Sandy Beach county park, or right on Montezuma Hills Road. Take the right turn at this .5 mile point and proceed past the Vineyard Bluffs development up the gentle slope. At the 1.5 mile point is Emigh Road and the McCormack family ranch on the left. You catch your first up-close sighting of the massive size dwarfs Continue on



the wind turbines, whose everything else around. the main road as it gets steeper until a rest point at mile point 3.7 where it flattens out, then climbs again to mile point 6.8 at the SMUD Solano Wind Project facility where the road turns right and flattens again. The first shade of large eucalyptus trees begins at mile point

7.6. Continue on until at mile point 10.7, the road intersects with Bird's Landing Road at the Anderson Ranch. Turn left, and at mile point 12.1, you reach Bird's Landing and the Tavern at the junction with Collinsville Road.

If the flag is up, the Tavern is open and you can go inside for a cold one and a blast of local history. The walls are covered with memorabilia and photos going back many years and showing the town from its earliest days when Mr. Bird's landing was a shipping point on the Montezuma Slough for local farmers to send their grain products abroad. This remarkable Tavern, whose proprietor, Shirley Paolini and her family, have been serving up libations and lunches for many years, has been a true regional landmark for many generations of residents and visitors.

Another point of interest is found if you turn left on Collinsville Road to the Bird's Landing Hunting Preserve and Sporting Clays, which features four skeet shooting ranges, a full service shop with hunting rifles, shotguns, ammunition and gear, and a café serving breakfast and lunch from 7 to 2 every day except Tuesday.

You can also continue down Collinsville Road, past the Collinsville cemetery (worth a look) to the very tiny town of Collinsville, another four miles, where the road ends at a levee (mile point 16.5). From the top of this levee is a panoramic view across the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers to Pittsburg and Antioch. This town is still recovering from a fire in July 2014 that damaged and destroyed over half the homes.



If you are returning to Rio Vista by car, stay on Bird's Landing Road without turning back onto Montezuma Hills Road and it takes you to a junction with Highway 12 at its junction with Highway 113, where you turn right to return to Rio Vista. Bicyclists should return on Montezuma Hills Road, as Highway 12 is much too dangerous and not at all designed for bicycles.