



A tour to support the Blue Dragon Foundation for kids

by Conrad Moller

Final part of Vietnam tour

Sin Ho to Sapa – 130km

Once again Mark and Digby came through with a bacon-and-egg breakfast which was devoured by all except a couple of the previous night's budding entertainers. After schlepping our luggage down to the van and checking our bikes, we got underway before 0800. The first 20 km took just under an hour to complete, then we were on to some very good bitumen, as my Aussie companions called it.



We only had rain twice during the tour but both times it was prudently decided to seek shelter and wait it out, usually about 45 minutes.

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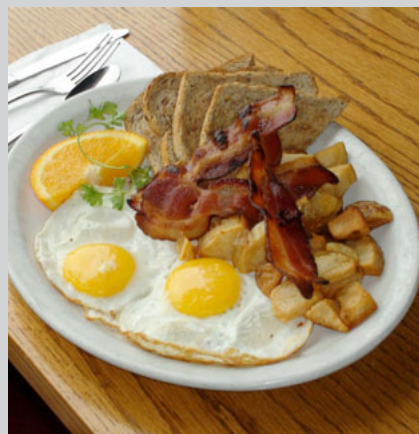
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Next Breakfast/Brunch

Saturday, September 2



WHERE:

Oak & Carriage Pub
3287 Cowichan Lake Road
Duncan, BC

WHEN:

11:00 am

MEET UP:

Tim Hortons Millstream
9:15 am



Cable car ride resulted in cloudy views



After the 6.9 Km cable car ride, 100 gasping steps and a funicular ride the summit of Mt Fansipan with the view obscured by cloud.

Along with the good road there was spectacular scenery. Hard to keep your mind on the road. We kept climbing and my bike kept gasping for air but nothing that couldn't be overcome by a downshift.

We arrived in the Sapa area too early to check into our hotel, so we were shepherded to the Mt Fansipan cable car for the 6.9km ride up the mountain where we then climbed 100 steps and rode the funicular to the summit at 3,143 metres. After returning to the main level we had a very nice lunch with an incredible view of the Cat Cat Valley below. Following an equally stunning ride back down the mountain, we mounted up and finished our ride into Sapa, which is a bustling mecca for trekkers and

a beehive of construction activity with countless hotels in various stages of construction.

Sapa – Lay Day

Our first and only lay day was Sapa and everyone was grateful for the

rest and the opportunity it provided us to shop and barter with the hill tribe women selling their goods on the street. These women had a very good command of English and had a good comeback for every excuse you can think of for not buying from them. A visit to the H'Mong cultural centre gave us an opportunity to see some of the women weaving cloth on a handmade loom and others embroidering.

My morning walkabout took me through the food market street where there were some beautiful looking vegetables on offer. There were also the usual third world butcher shops where I saw one woman butchering a hind of water buffalo; she also had dog meat - complete with head - for sale.

Sapa to Bac Ha – 142 Km + 20

The departure from Sapa was under threatening skies and it wasn't



Relaxing at a shaded park in Lau Cai after lunch, in the background, across the Pink river is the city of Hekoushen China.



Lunch break occurred on the roadside



Lunch was taken at the side of the road. All hands assisted in the preparation usually after the photos had been taken.

until we were in our underground parking garage that I realized our lead had his wet gear on. I quickly donned mine, but was still the last one out of the garage with Chan on my tail. I missed the second corner marker and went straight instead of left and was chased down by Chan, who led me back to where we met the van and he indicated for me to carry on with him in sweep. After about 10 km Chan caught up to tell me that we were going in the wrong direction. We turned around and finally caught up to the group who were patiently waiting, except for our guide, for us to catch up.

We continued on north, travelling

some very mountainous roads with exceptional scenery, stopping in a small village for a break which gave us time to check out the



Our last meal as a group at the Moose and Roo on the old grounds of the US embassy. The BBQ was delicious and tender as opposed to most of the meat dishes served with the local fare.

market scene. This included more vegetables and the usual meat offerings displayed on scruffy tables, with the butchers waving their fly dispersal wands. Once again underway, we headed for Lau Cai which is on the Red River with the Chinese city of Hekoushen on the opposite bank.

We took our lunch in a nicely shaded park right next to the bridge which crosses the river and enjoyed watching the steady flow of bicycle traffic carrying indescribably large loads back from the Chinese side. We also were witness to a small time smuggling operation being conducted in broad daylight. We never did ascertain what the contraband was, but it was hauled up from the river by rope and quickly dispersed to waiting scooter mules.

The departure from Lau Cai was via excellent four lane highway



Cheque presented at the Blue Dragon



The presentation of the cheque to the Blue Dragon Foundation by our intrepid, tired but well fed happy group.

travelling at the breakneck speed of 60km/h, which eventually morphed into a very good country road for the remainder of the ride to Bac Ha.

This was our last night on the road, so after settling into our rooms and scrubbing up we headed out to try some Bai Hoi which is described at “fresh beer” taken sitting around on the sidewalk in the ubiquitous tiny plastic chair. The beer was good and the bill for five jugs and one Heineken was 185,000 dong or just over \$7 Canadian . Our evening meal at the Sao Mai hotel was the best of the trip and with a couple more beers to complement it, I was ready to retire.

Bac Ha to Lau Cai – 77 Km

We enjoyed another good breakfast as the guides provided the hotel kitchen the remainder of the bacon and eggs. When presented with an option of a short or long ride back to Lau Cai, the unanimous decision

was the short route with a stop at H’Mong market along the way. This market was complete with just about everything you could want - including an animal section and live music.

The remaining distance was covered over the worst road of the ride. With washouts, gravel and endless bumps, it was slow going, but eventually we arrived in Lau Cai in time to unpack our bikes, change and rehydrate before our transport arrived for our return to Hanoi. We had been told that the highway was new construction, but it was far from that, nor was it a comfortable ride. This was the only road I had seen that was signed at 100km/h, much too fast for the road condition.

After arriving back in Hanoi and being dropped at our hotel in the old quarter, we had time to clean up before being once again whisked away in cyclos to the American

Club, where we were treated to a BBQ dinner at the Moose and Roo. I was hoping for mac and cheese, but the large plate offering all the house BBQ and fixings was a fine substitute.

With dinner completed it was time for the official presentation of our cheque to the Blue Dragon Foundation which totaled at that time AUS \$14,414 with more to follow. My first visit to Vietnam was all that I had expected and more. The long days on a small bike were at times uncomfortable, but as speeds are low there it is the right way to go. It is a place I would return to as I would be safe in saying this was not just a tour but a real adventure.

I would like to thank each and everyone of those club members who sponsored me during this ride. Because of your generosity over \$2600 was donated to the cause which made me the top campaigner.



Club member May Crompton passes

The Club lost a treasure Sunday, August 13 as May Crompton succumbed to injuries she had suffered in a bicycle accident. Everyone who knew May will feel the loss as she was a bright light at any club function and worked to assist her partner Peter Juergensen with many club activities.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2 p.m., Sunday, October 15th, at the Olympic View Golf Course. In May's memory, contributions may be made to The READ Society: readsociety.bc.ca



May Crompton





A great day for a barbecue. Everyone enjoying the sunshine and friendship at the Club BBQ. Thanks to Gail and Randy for opening up their lovely home.

Club 2017 Event Schedule

Date	Event	Location
Saturday, September 2, 2017	Monthly Gathering	Oak and Carriage, Duncan
Sunday, September 17, 2017	Monthly Ride	Port Renfrew / Cowichan Loop
Sunday, October 7, 2017	Monthly Gathering	The Crooked Goose
TBD October 2017	Annual Meeting	TBD
Saturday, November 4, 2017	Monthly Gathering	Spitfire Bar & Grill
Sunday, December 3, 2017	Monthly Gathering	TBD
Monday, January 1, 2018	TROC	Island View Beach & Bob's House
Saturday, January 6, 2018	Monthly Gathering	Cherries Breakfast Bistro