

G Street North to the Merced River (13 Miles, 20.9 km)

The traditional meeting place for this very popular trip is in the parking lot near Raley's Market at G Street and Yosemite Avenue. This ride provides two *bona fide* hills and an invigorating twenty-eight mile road trip. Don't let these facts discourage you though. What goes up must come down. The hills in question are relatively slight in inclination, if somewhat long, and can be negotiated without being a professional cyclist. The gently rolling countryside is impressive in its expanse and the long, easy roll down the other sides is pure pleasure. Beware of one mistake. There are virtually no trees along this route so it is advisable, at least in hot weather, to accomplish this ride in early morning, say before 9:00 a.m.

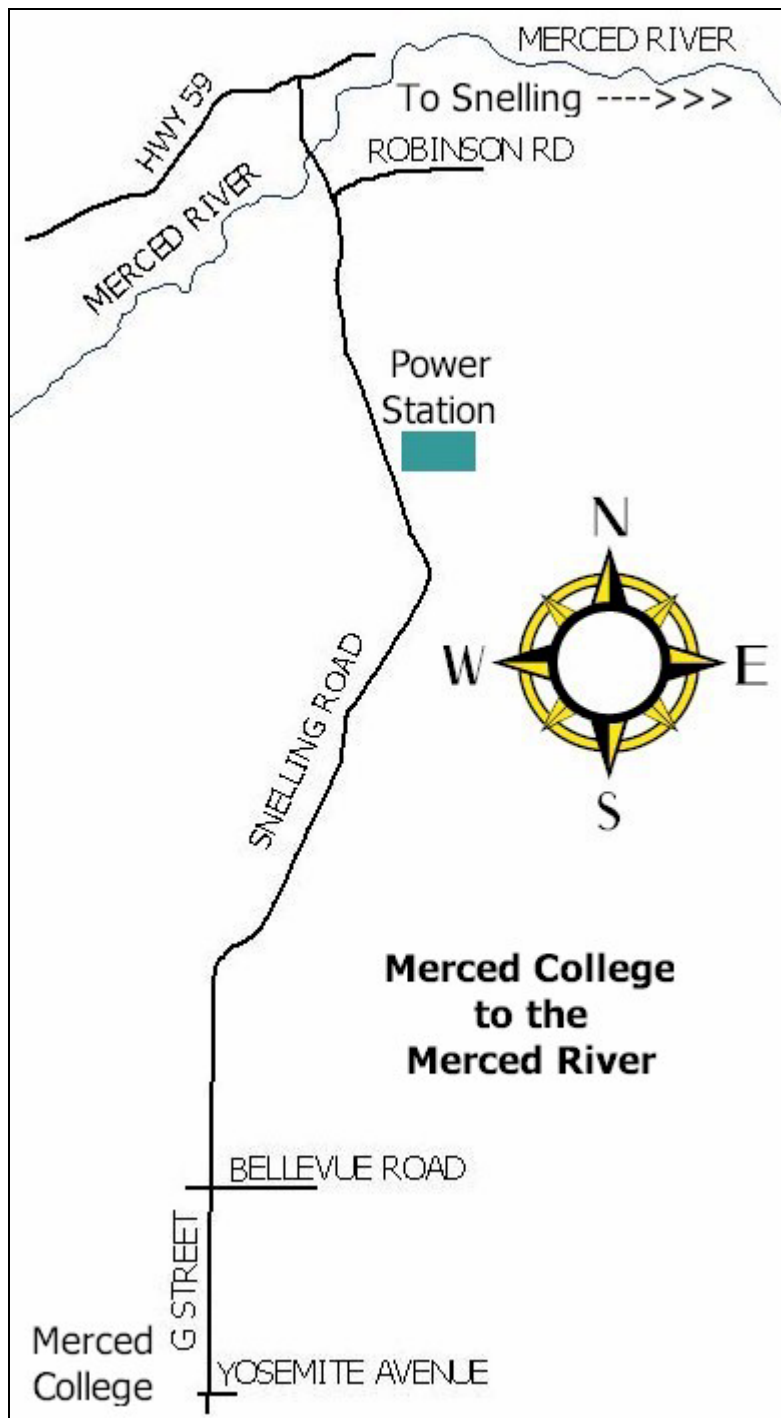
The road stretches straight north out of Merced for about five miles (8 km) when it takes a sweeping turn to the right. You pass La Paloma Road and gradually begin your ascent of the first hill. The bike lane on the entire route is ample and the surface is very good. If you are going with others you may become separated on the hills depending on each person's effort and capability. Going slowly is sometimes good. Be aware enough of the surroundings to catch the action of the many birds and beasts (wild and domestic) in the fields. The sun will be on your right in the morning warming you as you go. The smell of grass and the sound of the breeze tell you that you are in the middle of nature's pastures of play. On this huge stage you are another being in motion along with the squirrels and birds and rabbits. You will come to a rather large transverse canal at the Richard Parker Power Plant at the 11-mile mark (17.7 km) after you come from the top of the hill. If you have a mind to, this is a pleasant place to stop. Don't let the purists dog you for this "delay." If you're out for pleasure, you find it where it is. People will stop here to fish and many an interesting conversation can be struck up with fishing folks.

After you leave the power plant, you're at the top of the second hill before you know it. This should put you at about 12.0 miles (19.3km) from the start. Going down the backside is a lot of fun. A beautiful valley stretches out before you down to the green tree-lined banks of the Merced River. You have arrived.

As with all trips, going back always seems shorter for some unaccountable psychological reason. With any luck, the wind is behind you. The first hill on the way back is a cinch. The climb up the second is very gradual and leads to a long and well-deserved descent onto the straight and satisfying approach back to town. You have ridden from trees to trees in a sense through some of the prettiest foothills in the region. Congratulations.

Plan on 1.5 to 2 hours for the round trip.

By Edward Blanchard



Gently sloping hills with good bike lane all the way.

Farm fields with no shade.

Breeze from north usually.