

PMVC Training Camp in
San Vero Milis, Sardinia, May 19-27, 2017

After an 8-year hiatus, an intrepid, if somewhat older, gentler, and milder group of PMVCers (Ruud, Michele, Steve, Steve, and Bill (Barron) made the trek to the bustling community of San Vero Milis, in Oristano province near Cabras on the western coast of Sardinia. The center of operations was the agriturismo of Daniela Cubbada and her husband Mauro, who looked just the same as they had eight years ago, if not younger. San Vero looked the same, too, if not even more dusty and bedraggled. The only significant change was that traffic circles had been placed at intersections all around the outskirts of the town: the EU at work. The agriturismo was the same too, although it had grown much more lush with shrubs and bushes. We all had separate rooms, and we woke up each morning to the sound of sprinklers watering the lawn and the clip, clip, clip of people trimming the hedges. The weather was mild and sunny the whole time. Not to mention windy.



Daniela and Bill

SATURDAY. Ruud and Michele had arrived the day before on a fruitless mission to get our bicycles from the rental place in Cagliari. It was locked up for a long siesta, so they went to San Vero for a swim, and returned to the Cagliari airport next day to pick up Steve, Oscar, Bill, and the bicycles: three Cubes, one Trek, and a Scott. There were basically no bicycle complaints the entire week: no flats, mishaps, or repairs; even the saddles were comfortable, and the Ultegra derailleurs shifted fine. Since no one had brought a real pump, we rode the entire week on a single tire inflation. The plague of German-speaking motorcycle riders, who race at maniacal speeds in convoys of half-a-dozen or so up and down the pretty country roads and around the bends seems to have gotten even worse than before, the car traffic was thicker and less patient, and the road surfaces had deteriorated somewhat from eight years ago; but who's complaining?



German motorcyclists haven't heard about the four-foot, or even the three- or two-foot rule.

We made it to San Vero by early afternoon in time to take in the classic Monte Ferru ride through Seneghe, Santu Lussurghiu, and Cuglieri, back along the long straight 50-55 kmph descent into S'Arcitu and a stop at our favorite bar there for gelato. Ruud essayed a swim on the rocky beach in back of the bar, where a few other stalwart souls were attempting to surf.



Sun and Sardinia. Ruud ("winter shorts") and Steve.

What the Mr. Ferru ride meant was that we never did get around to doing the classic 34-km flat warm-up ride to the beach at Putzu Idu. As a substitute, one evening we watched the video "Putzu Idu is Burning," with cameo appearances by Oscar (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdjOSgnu6uM>). A leisurely ride from S'Arcitu back to San Vero. Dinner was served slightly differently this trip, with the antipasto course (usually, olives, olive oil, and flatbread) being eliminated, and no fruit course (oranges and medlars) served afterwards. Indeed, we saw no medlars this time. However, the Sardinian flat bread was always on the table, and either red or white wine, depending on the main dish. Michele had to be trained not to send the wine back early. To make up for the loss of the antipasto course, more side

dishes were served with dinner, with eggplant and zucchini being the most popular vegetables of the day. DINNER: The first night we had home-made pasta, roast beef, crackers & cheese, seared eggplant, braised peppers, chocolate cake, coffee, and mirto. Steve performed the solemn handing over of the T-shirts, including to Daniela and Mauro. [50 Miles]



Our server, Filippo, with Bill, Ruud, and Steve

SUNDAY. Most of our rides this time were “age-adjusted,” a concession to the fact that some of us, not mentioning any names outside of mine, did not really feel at full strength. However, on Sunday we did do the rugged classic Bosa-Alghero-Bosa in full. In fact, Steve and Oscar added another 15-20 km to it by taking a wrong turn and having to ride back to Alghero to meet Ruud, Michele, and Bill for lunch in Alghero. Bill was with Ruud and Michele by virtue of his impressive descending skills, which in no way yielded to theirs. By lunchtime Oscar had basically fallen apart from trying to keep up with Michele from the top of the Bosa climb over the long plateau to Villanova Monte Leone, and he straggled back to Bosa basically on his own, with Ruud looking in on him from time to time. On the way back, we stopped in our bar in S’Arcitu for an Ichnusa refresher. Bill sent the snapshot below to Eric, Dusty, and Stephanie, whence it quickly made its way around the world. DINNER: pork chops and pork sausages, seared peppers and eggplant, frittata (cheese pie), tomato salad, pecorino for dessert, mirto. [Steve and Oscar: 70 Miles. Everyone else: 55 Miles]



Ichnusa is our beer.

MONDAY. Billed as Mauro’s Dream Loop, this ride turned out to be something of a dud since, after winding picturesquely south along the sandy coast (the misnamed Costa Verde: nothing green about it), the road abruptly ended in an uphill impassable (for road bikes) deep sandy trail. We should have taken the turn to

Monte Vecchio and come back to Merceddi through Arbus and Guspini, but by the time we got back to that point, we had lost enthusiasm. That would be a good ride for another day. The shortness of the ride gave Ruud extra time to hit the beach in the afternoon, wearing his winter shorts. DINNER: pasta, swordfish steak smothered in chopped tomatoes, mashed potatoes, eggplant with capers, pan-fried zucchini. Tira misu and limoncello for dessert. [40 Miles]



Ruud and Michele either before or after Mauro's Dream Loop.



Contemplating what to do next on the sandy Costa Verde ride.

TUESDAY: a designated "rest day," as Ruud drove Michele to the Cagliari airport, while Steve, Bill, and Oscar took a flat, wind-aided trip to the Phoenician ruins at Tharros, thence to Torre Grande for lunch, and back to San Vero through Cabras and a string of dusty villages. Despite the flat terrain and leisurely attitude, we put on 45 miles at a pretty good clip. DINNER: rice with pumpkin and cheese, beef strips in sauce, green salad with carrots and walnuts, fried potatoes, zucchini muffins, a nice flan with caramel sauce for dessert, mirto, coffee. After dinner, a failed trip into town to the bar with no name. It was closed by the time we got there. [44.5 Miles]



The van, loaded and ready to go.

WEDNESDAY: A much-shortened, age-adjusted version of a classic, irritatingly-picturesque mountain villages ride, incorporating parts of the old Ghilarza ride, which we did not do this time. On the present ride we omitted Tonara and Disulo (the highest pass in Sardinia). The route went: Sarule-Olzai-Teti-Sorgono (wrong turn)-Tiana-Ovadda-Gavoi, with a beautiful wind-aided swish back to Sarule. 6200 feet of climbing in 60 miles. Bill, who had mounted a GoPro video camera on his bars, documented Ruud's dramatic descent to Olzai (see further below). Sensing that Eric was missing from the group, the barking dogs stayed at home for the climb up to Teti. For hors-d'oeuvres before dinner we sampled Steve's €1.40 box of wine (not bad, actually) and Oscar's and Bill's salted nuts. **DINNER:** pasta, baked chicken, fried eggplant, green salad, broiled vegetables, for dessert: pardula (puff pastry), mirto, coffee. [60 Miles]



Steve, in front of his residence, carrying his box of fine wine Sardinian wine.

THURSDAY: Envisioned as a semi-rest day, the ride went from San Vero past Milis, constantly slightly uphill to Paulilatino. The aim was to climb the back way up Monte Ferru to Santuu Lussorghiu and back. At the beginning, Oscar tried to keep up with Ruud, leaving him (i.e. Oscar) oxygen disabled by Paulilatino, so he rode the front way up Monte Ferru through Bonacardo and met the others coming back from Santu Lussorghiu. Lunch in Seneghe, and ice cream and coffee in Milis, a pretty town we had never really stopped in before. Back in San Vero, we watched Teejay Van Garderen impressively win a tough mountain stage in the Giro, sprinting around Mikel Landa at the end. By way of compensation, Landa won the next-day's stage. **DINNER:** Fregola pasta with tomato sauce and mussels, followed by another large plate of mussels, toasted bread with tuna spread, fried eggplant slices, stuffed zucchini—all in all, more than could possibly be eaten. Dessert was vanilla sorbet followed by mirto and coffee, and another unsuccessful visit to the bar with no name. It seems they close whenever they feel like it. [37.5 miles]

FRIDAY: A radically foreshortened version of the classic Laconi ride, which turned out to be maybe the best ride of the week (although Ruud liked Sarule best). Laconi is situated high in the mountains. From there we went to Villanova Tulo, down to the base of the day's main climb, then to Isili, Nurallao, and back to Laconi. From the top of the main climb to the base of the climb back to Laconi (a good 20 miles) was flat, very fast, and wind-aided, with speeds often over 30mph. After the ride, we drove to the bike rental place in Cagliari to return the bikes. DINNER: orzo pasta, roast pork, braised potatoes, stuffed eggplant, puff pastries with chocolate sauce, mirto, coffee. After dinner we settled accounts with Daniela, and took possession of the botarga packages she had procured for us. [44.5 Miles]



The van, with Bosa in the background.

SATURDAY: We drive at 6:00 am to the airport. Bill and Ruud take an earlier 10:20 flight, leaving Steve and Oscar to fly at 11:30 to Rome, JFK-New York, and Pittsburgh for what turned out to be a very arduous trip back home. Oscar totally put out his neck on the trip, and had to go to the emergency room on Monday to get a muscle-relaxant prescription. He's been flat on his back ever since. Those donut pillows are probably good idea for a trip like this. Bill was staying on in Italy for a couple of days before returning home. Thanks to Ruud for an excellent week of driving, and to Ruud and Steve for excellent ride choices.

MILEAGE: $50 + 70 + 40 + 44.5 + 60 + 37.5 + 44.5 = 346.50$ (call it 350, since I didn't always remember to start the computer right away).

APPENDIX I: Bill's excellent GoPro videos, mostly of Ruud descending, giving a very good idea of the terrain in a downhill direction. The best is: Ruud's descent into Olzai.

1. Climbing on the not-flat Costa Verde ride; Michele and Oscar up front:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FT0JqjgOi0>

<https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D3FT0JqjgOi0&data=01%7C01%7CSWAN%40pitt.edu%7C4d396147d488424a091108d4a7311b5d%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1&sdata=Xwgu4D%2BNsyDzjY%2BK2UEOrI5QVaiDatt6H5cFhhb9Rkk%3D&reserved=0>

2. Ruud descends to Olzai from Sarule:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QFKvUZmwFgE>

https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DBe_Z4SiCPXs&data=01%7C01%7CSWAN%40pitt.edu%7C6b53ef03a83d47554f2708d4a72cd04d%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1&sdata=YAaKYYennr%2FLYfERqAMuOrB96ZM7V2xc4kYsxOMadGI%3D&reserved=0

3. Following Ruud the wrong-way through the streets of Alghero:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgIN_1Cb-1Y

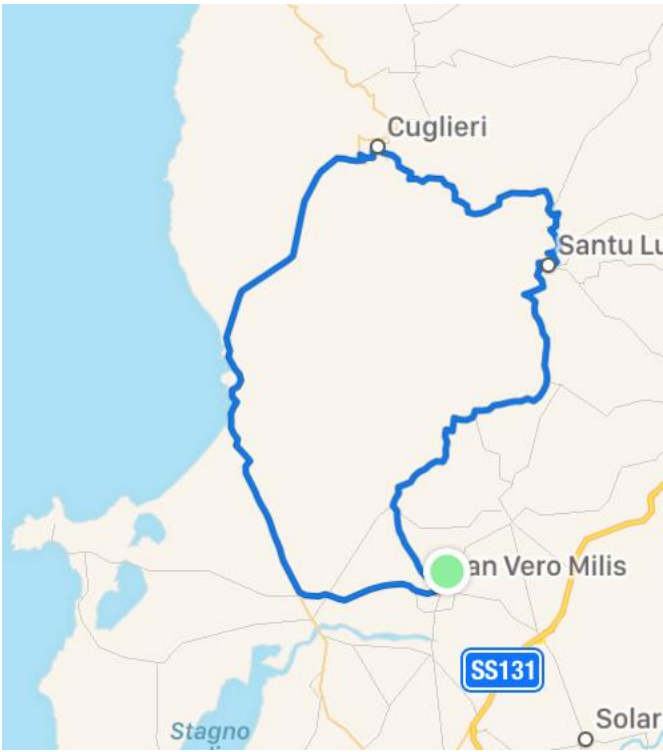
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4. Ruud and Bill ride into Sarule:

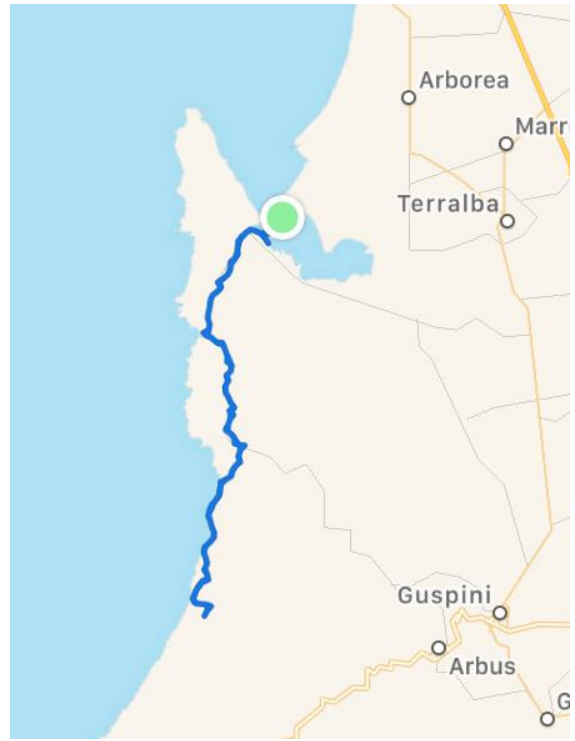
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be_Z4SiCPXs

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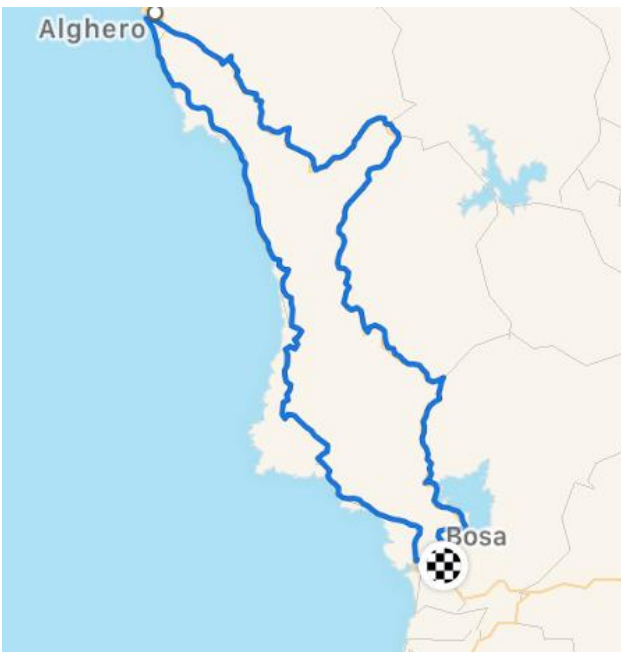
APPENDIX II: Bill's Strava maps of all rides:



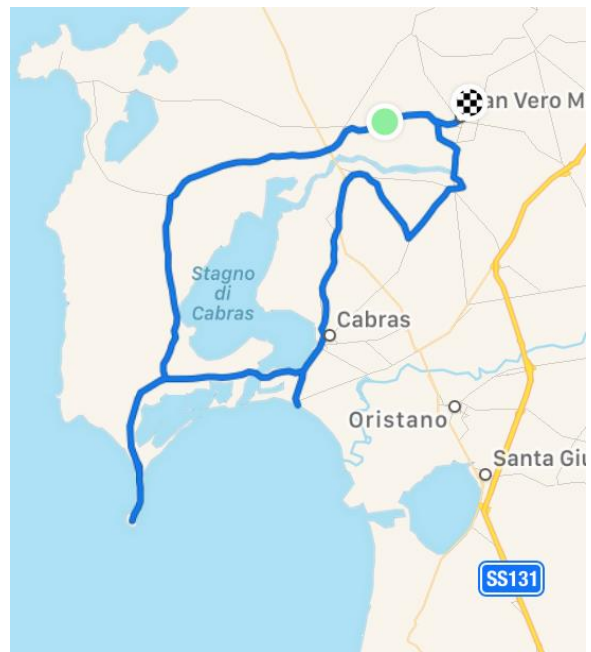
Monte Ferru



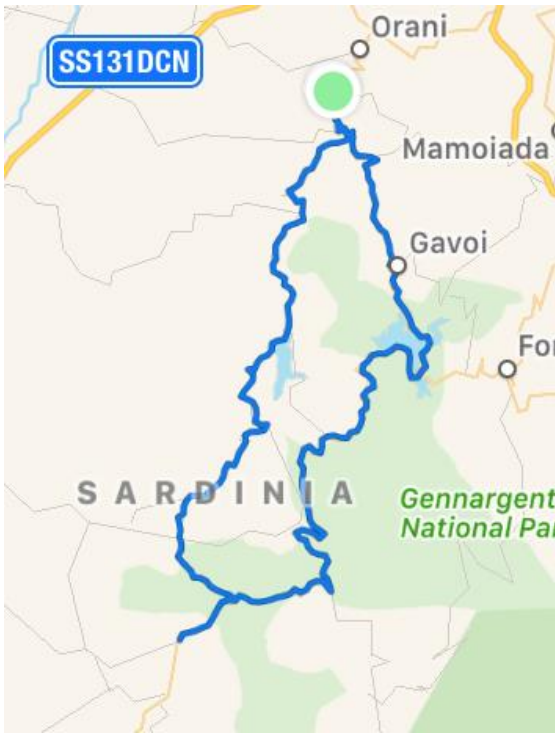
Costa Verde



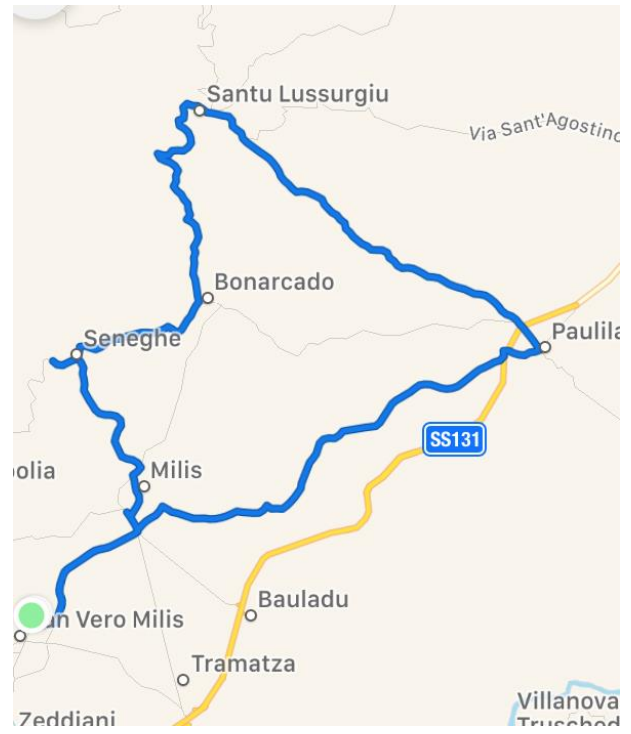
Bosa Alghero



Tharros-Torre Grande



Sarule



Paulilatino-Santu Lussurgiu



Laconi