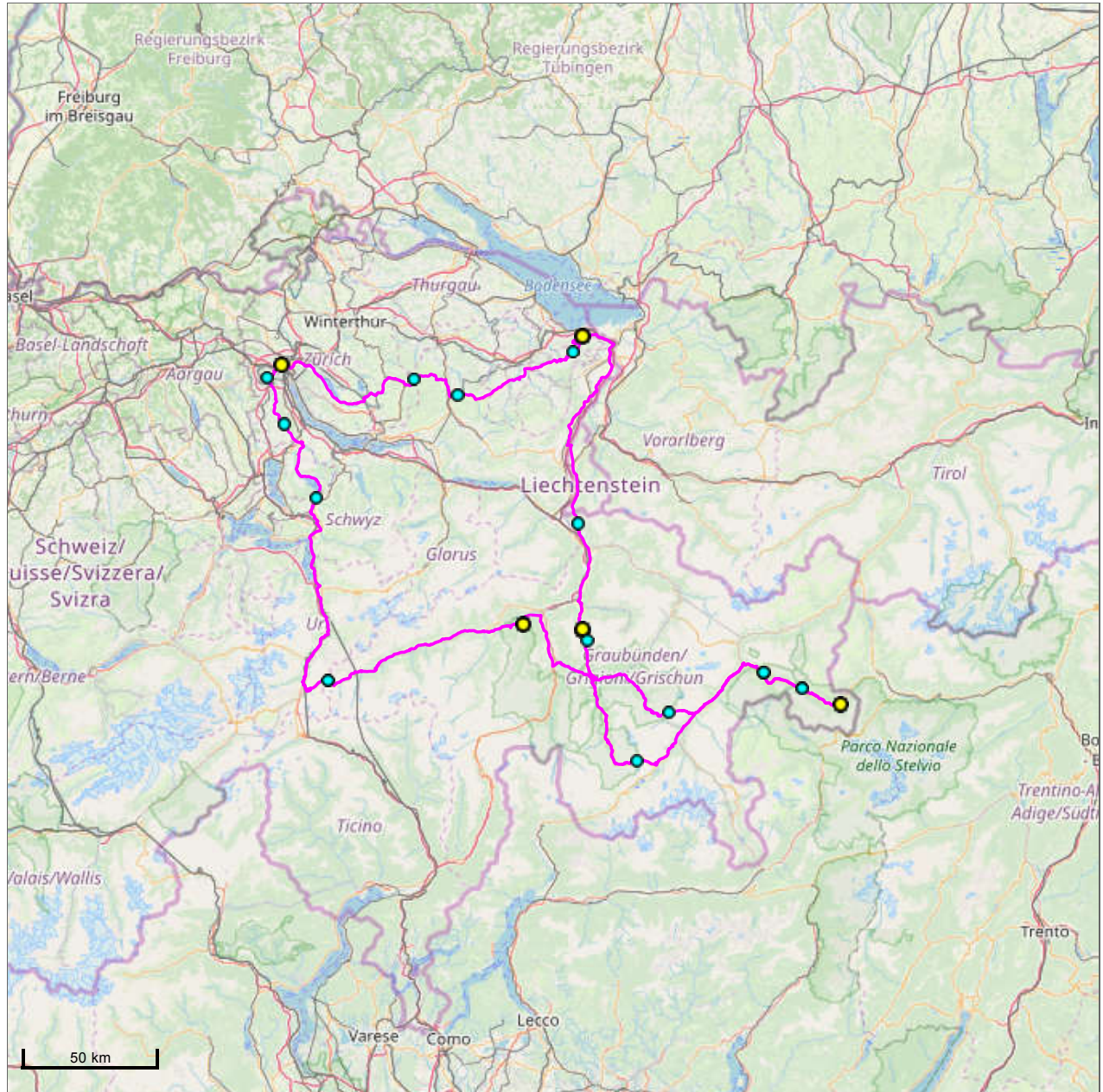
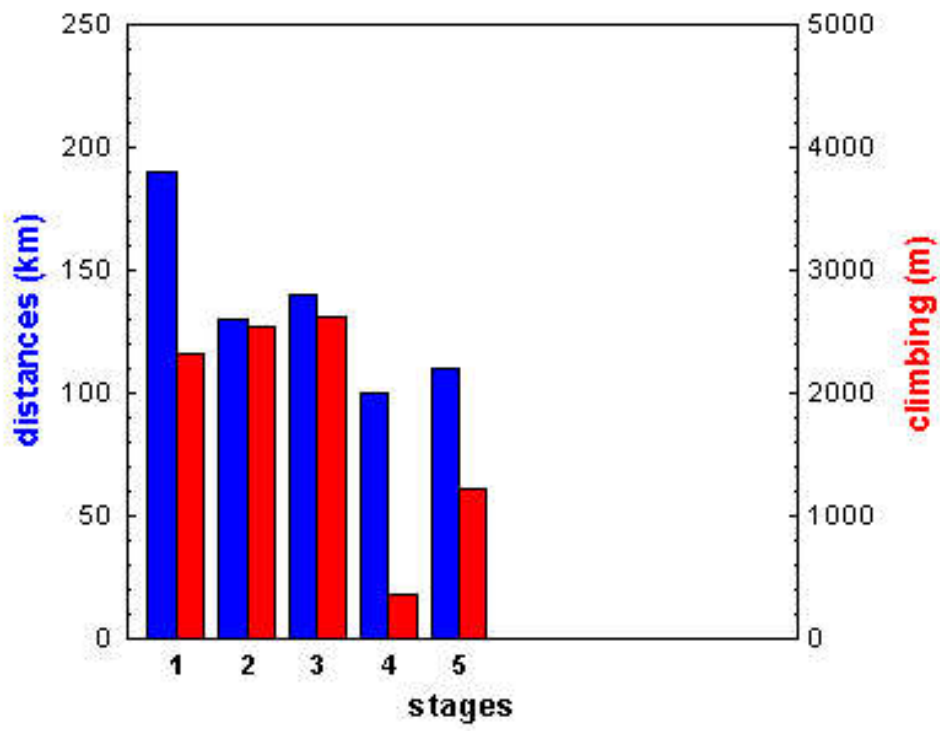


# Bicycle tour 1991, 09 - 15 July

Patrick Schleppei

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Zurich - Oneralp - Versam	191	2600
Versam - Albula - Fuorn - Sta. Maria	131	2730
Sta. Maria - Fuorn - Güglia - Churwalden	134	2530
Churwalden - St. Luzisteig - Wienacht	100	460
Wienacht - Wasserfluh - Hulftegg - Zürich	122	1550
<b>total</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>9870</b>





Rain Anterior river under Versam



The Albula road and railroad between entre Bergün/Bravuogn and Preda



The Fuorn pass as seen from the east



Ova Spin



## Stage 1 (9 July 1991): Zurich - Oneralp - Versam

I decided to leave Zurich early this Tuesday morning. I had prepared everything the evening before. Everything inclusive some isotonic beverage in the bottle. I had it in the refrigerator for the night. Well, it remained there during the whole tour: it was only when riding out of the city to Waldegg that i noticed that i had forgotten it. And it was still just after 6 o'clock. After riding to the Türlensee and Sihlbrugg, i took the road towards the Ägerisee. At Oberägeri i finally found a shop... and a new bottle.

I arrived at the Lake of 4 Cantons at Brunnen and had a short rest. It was 9 o'clock. In german Brunnen means fountain, but i had to ride a bit around town before i found it. Then it went further along the famous Axenstrasse, the road partly carved in the cliffs along the lake. Beautiful. But much too much traffic, especially heavy traffic. After the end of the lake is the town of Altdorf. The road is almost flat along the valley, but imperceptibly it begins to go up. From around Amsted it gets more serious. The town of Wassen is famous for its church. Nothing so special by itself, but when you ride by train you can see it three times because the railroad makes curves in tunnels to gain elevation. When i arrived there, my bike seemed to be tired: it made a bad noise at every pedal stroke. It was just a bolt to be retighten. Here i must say that i made this tour with a 6 year old bike Olmo Grand Prix. Not a bad bike, Columbus frame, Campagnolo derailleur, but really the cheapest parts of these brands.

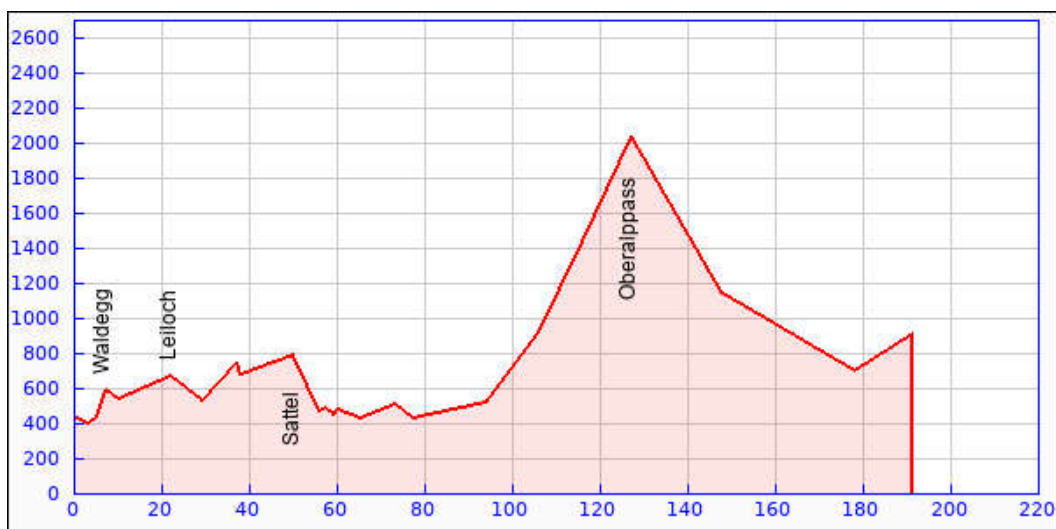
From Göschenen the roads goes really up into the narrow passage of the Schöllenen. Because of the mountains all around, the pollution from the traffic stays around and it really stinks. At that point, at least, the heavy traffic is in the Gothard tunnel. When coming out of the Schöllenen, the valley opens widely and the town of Andermatt is in reach. There i stopped to eat a piece of bread and to drink. The sky was a bit cloudy when i went into saddle again, up to the Oberalp pass. I had a couple of rain drops while climbing, but this was just nicely refreshing.

There is also a cog-wheel train which goes this way up. It is well known among tourists because it is part of the Glacier Express. I arrived at the pass without any problem. At the small souvenir shop, i decided to buy a sticker. The kind of sticker you can put on your car if you are proud that you made the pass. But it is just too big to be glued on a bike, so you may ask "what for?". Well, just a souvenir. And the start of a long series of stickers, still expanding every summer.

Riding down to Disentis, i saw an helicopter in action, removing bolewood from a whole side of the valley where the storm "Vivian" had thrown all trees down. Further downhill, i had some rain again. Wet feet are not fun at all. But then i reached Ilanz. The rain stopped but i had to climb again. There has been a tremendous rock- slide there in prehistorical times, as glaciation ended. Billions of cubic meters came down and closed the valley. The Rhine river eventually found a way through the rocks. The railroad goes along the river, but the main road goes up along the left side of the valley. For bikes, the right side is much better because of the few traffic.

I was quite exhausted when i finally reached Versam, a nice village over the Rhine valley. There i found a very fine little hotel, all with wood, with very nice staff... and really cheap. Just perfect.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Höngg (Zürich)	0	440	
Altstetten	3	400	
Albisrieden	5	440	40
<b>Waldegg</b>	7	590	150
Sellenbüren	10	540	
<b>Leiloch</b>	22	670	130
Sihlbrugg	29	530	
Führholz	37	750	220
Neuägeri	38	680	
<b>Sattel</b>	50	790	110
Steinen	56	470	
Platten	57	490	20
Seewen	59	450	
Rösslimatt	60	480	30
Brunnen	65	430	
Tellskapelle	73	510	80
Flüelen	77	430	
Amsteg	94	520	90
Wassen	106	920	400
Andermatt	116	1440	520
<b>Oberalppass</b>	127	2040	600
Disentis/Mustér	148	1140	
Ilanz/Glion	178	700	
Versam	191	910	210
<b>total</b>	<b>191</b>		<b>2600</b>



## Stage 2 (10 July 1991): Versam - Albula - Fuorn - Sta. Maria

One year before, i had had a bike accident. I had flown over a car whose driver had not yielded to me at a crossing. Two ligaments and one meniscus had been broken in my left knee. The 1991 tour was the first longer bike trip after this accident. I feared a little bit that i could still suffer from it. Actually, my *right* knee ached terribly when i rode off for this second stage of the tour. I did not need long to understand that this was because of my new Look pedals. I had them since a couple of months, but had used them only on shorter, one-day tours. Now i just had to adjust better the angle of the right shoe. After this, my knee still ached, but less and less.

There were some breathtaking viewpoints during this stage. For example downhill from Versam, where the road crosses a very high and narrow bridge over the Rabiusa stream. The gorges of the Albula between Thusis and Tiefencastel are also... gorgeous. There are unfortunately several longer tunnels on this stretch. It is no good feeling to hear a truck roaring in a tunnel behind you, especially when you have a race bike without light.

From Fillisur, the road goes up towards the Albula pass. There are 1500 m to climb, but the landscape is beautiful and the traffic is not too bad (no heavy traffic). I really like this pass. By the way: it is also wonderful to ride the narrow-track train, especially between Bergün and Preda, the last, winding stretch before the tunnel. On the other side of the Albula is the high valley of Engiadina. It is also a very attractive landscape. With the bike, however, the straight road along the valley is not very interesting. When i hit Zernez, a new challenge was awaiting me: the next pass. It is called Ofen in german, Fuorn in rumantch, both meaning "oven".

I did not have a very good map. After climbing a good part of the pass, i had a bad surprise: the road went downhill. Knowing that every meter of elevation i was loosing would have to be re climbed later, i really had no fun to ride this downhill stretch. At Punt la Drossa, there is a tunnel leading to Livigno in Italy. From there, the road climbs again to the Fuorn. It crosses the National Park of Switzerland. I must say that i was tired; i had to stop on the way and had a drink on the terrace of a restaurant. After the bad surprise of the Ofen pass, riding downhill towards Sta. Maria (Val Müstair) was a real pleasure. I knew that Brigitte and Peter, friends of mine, were awaiting me there. They were in vacations and had told me that i could meet them anytime after 4 o'clock. Unfortunately, their description of the house was much too imprecise (all houses looked alike!) and i didn't find them. At 5, they finally arrived by car. "Oh, we thought you would never be able to ride all the way to here. We just didn't expect you to arrive today". Clearly, they still had to learn something about me!

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Versam	0	910	
Chera	2	740	
Spitg da l'Isa	3	770	30
Bonaduz	8	650	
Thusis	23	720	70
Sils im Domleschg	24	680	
Canals (Alvaschein)	34	960	280
Tiefencastel	36	850	
Filisur	45	1030	180
Bergün/Bravuogn	53	1350	320
<b>Pass d'Alvra</b>	66	2310	960
La Punt	75	1690	
Zuoz	79	1720	30
Zernez	96	1470	
<b>Ova Spin</b>	102	1890	420
Punt la Drossa	108	1710	
<b>Pass dal Fuorn</b>	117	2150	440
Sta. Maria	131	1380	
<b>total</b>	<b>131</b>		<b>2730</b>



## Stage 3 (12 July 1991): Sta. Maria - Fuorn - Güglia - Churwalden

There was a day off between stages 2 and 3. I went with my friends to a longer walk in the Alps south of Sta. Maria (Piz Umbrail). I had sunburns as a souvenir of this hike when i left Sta. Maria with my bike.

The Fuorn was much easier from this side compared to the other. There was some head wind when i rode up the Engiadina. I crossed St. Moritz about at noon. I did not like this famous touristical town: like a big city transplanted into the mountains. Shortly after coming out of the traffic jams of St. Moritz i arrived at Silvaplana and started up to the Julier pass. From that side, it is no big deal. The other side is first steep, but then very long. I had to fight a headwind to ride down. The Julier is more or less parallel to the Albula. But it is by far not so nice and has too much traffic, including trucks.

I crossed the route of the previous stage at Tiefencastel and went up to Lenzerheide and Valbella. The solpe was fully exposed to the sun at this time of the day. I got very thirsty and had to adapt my pace to the exhaustion building up. This eventually gave me more time to look at the beautiful landscape, but the end of the stage had to come. I finally found an hotel room at Churwalden, in the descent from Valbella to Chur.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Sta. Maria	0	1380	
<b>Pass dal Fuorn</b>	14	2150	770
Punt la Drossa	23	1710	
<b>Ova Spin</b>	29	1890	180
Zernez	35	1470	
Zuoz	52	1720	250
La Punt	56	1690	
St. Moritz	68	1820	130
St. Moritz-Bad	69	1780	
Silvaplana	74	1820	40
<b>Pass dal Güglia</b>	81	2280	460
Bivio	90	1770	
Tiefencastel	116	850	
<b>Valbella</b>	130	1550	700
Churwalden	134	1240	
<b>total</b>	<b>134</b>		<b>2530</b>



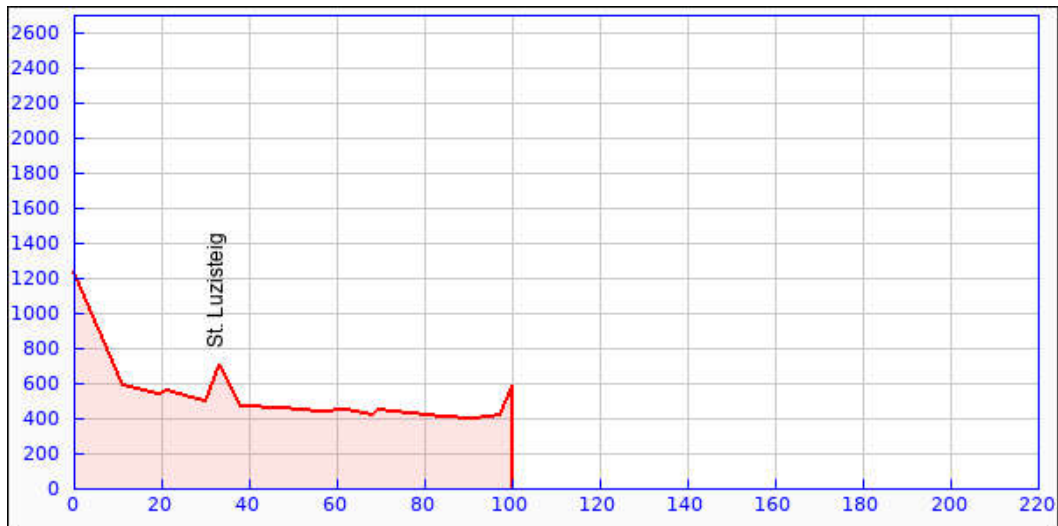
## Stage 4 (13 July 1991): Churwalden - St. Luzisteig - Wienacht

This fourth stage was clearly not the most interesting. After a fast descent towards Chur, i basically rode along the Rhine river. The route was accordingly quite flat, except for the hill of St. Luzisteig just before entering Liechtenstein. The principalty was the only foreign country i entered during this 1991 tour. There is a customs treaty between Switzerland and Liechtenstein; the border is therefore not guarded.

It is always a bad feeling when you have emptied your bottle and get thirsty, especially while riding along a river or a lake. I eventually had to leave the bike route along the Rhine just to go to one of the villages to look for a fountain.

The stage was not very long and i climbed to Wienacht-Tobel in the early afternoon. There i met Eva and Markus, friends living in one of the beautiful chalets of this village. I knew them since my post-doc in the USA (at ISU, Ames, Iowa). It was very good to see them again. And they had something to drink for me! Because we still had time, we went for a swim in the lake of Constance (Bodensee).

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Churwalden	0	1240	
Chur	11	590	
Untervaz	19	540	
Zizers	21	560	20
Landquart	25	530	
Meienfeld	30	500	
<b>St. Luzisteig</b>	33	710	210
Balzers	38	470	
Vaduz	47	460	
Haag	56	440	
Äugstiried	62	450	10
Rüthi	68	420	
Rehag	69	450	30
Widnau	84	410	
St. Margrethen	91	400	
Thal	97	420	20
Wienacht	100	590	170
<b>total</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>460</b>



## Stage 5 (15 July 1991): Wienacht - Wasserfluh - Hulftegg - Zürich

Wienacht is in the Canton of Appenzell. And Appenzell is renowned for its cheese (I personally also mix some of it in the fondue). Because it was raining on the Sunday, we went together to Stein, to visit the rural museum and the adjacent cheese factory. This was really a good way to spend the second day off during this bike tour.

The roads were still wet and there was some fog when I left Wienacht-Tobel on Monday morning. But the forecast was good. And there was no mistake in this. The ride through the hills was very pleasant. The landscape was very green and soft-shaped. The roads I took did not have much traffic. This changed only when I arrived near Zurich, where I lived at that time (working at the ETH).

This had been the first time I made such a bike tour. I liked it much and decided it would not be the last.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Wienacht	0	590	
Unterbilchen	3	830	240
Heiden	7	800	
<b>Kaien</b>	10	970	170
Wald	12	960	
Bruggmüli	15	800	
Trogen	17	900	100
Steinegg	20	910	10
Gmünder Tobel	27	690	
Stein	30	820	130
Hundwiler Tobel	34	760	
Brisig (Waldstatt)	38	900	140
Schönbühl	43	830	
Chrüzweg (Brunnadern)	49	670	
<b>Wasserfluh</b>	52	840	170
Lichtensteig	55	640	
Dietfurt	58	590	
Bütschwil	60	610	20
<b>Hulftegg</b>	71	950	340
Steg	76	700	
Bauma	81	640	
Bäretswil	85	710	70
Wetzikon	92	530	
Grüt	93	560	30
Mönchaltorf	99	440	
Schwamendingen	116	430	
Irchel	118	530	100
Wipkingen	121	410	
Höngg (Zürich)	122	440	30
<b>total</b>	<b>122</b>		<b>1550</b>

