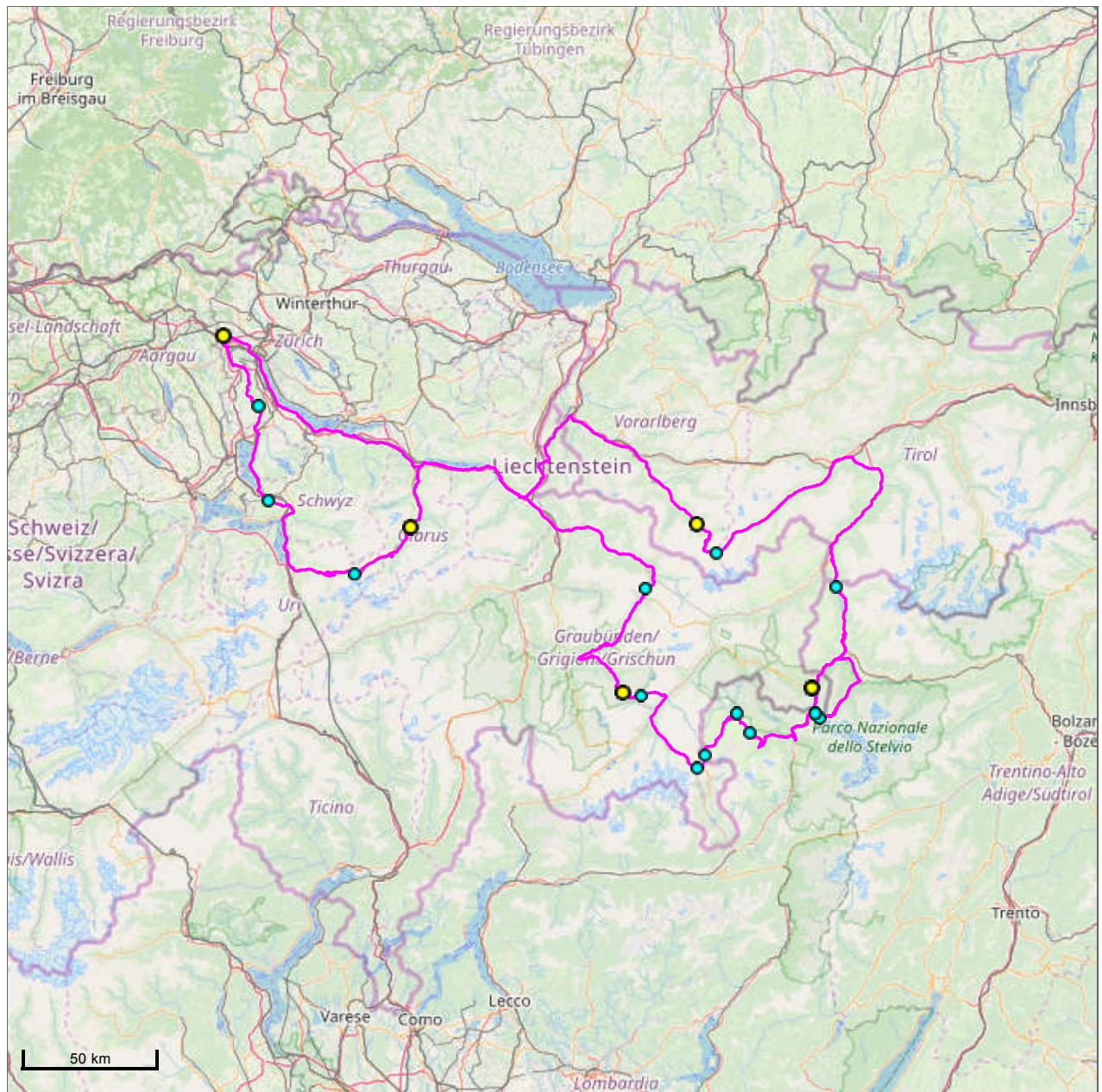
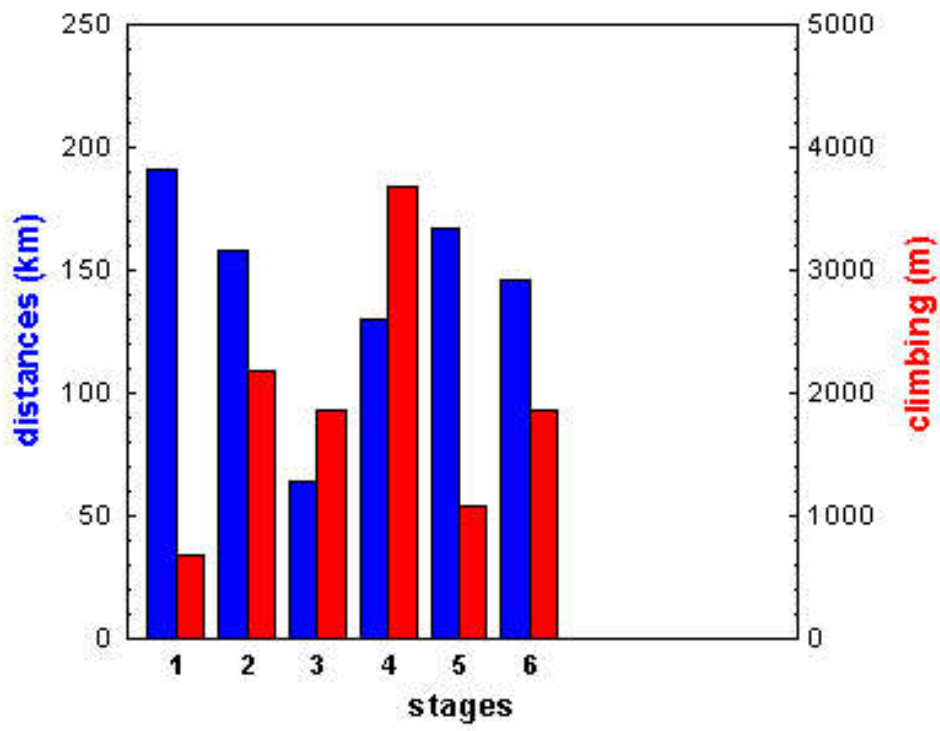


Bicycle tour 1994, 17 - 23 July

Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Oetwil a.d.L. - Sargans - Gaschurn	191	880
Gaschurn - Bielerhöhe - Reschen - Sta Maria	156	2290
Sta Maria - Stelvio - Umbrail - Sta Maria	64	1870
Sta Maria - Umbrail - Foscagno - Bernina - Albula - Preda	131	3670
Preda - Davos - Leuggelbach	166	1140
Leuggelbach - Klausen - Oetwil a.d.L.	144	2040
total	852	11890





Le church tower of Graun / Curon partly flooded by the lake of Reschen / Resia

Stage 1 (17 July 1994): Oetwil a.d.L. - Sargans - Gaschurn

It had been quite a stress to prepare this tour. The day before (it was a Saturday) i had to go to my office to check something. The next thing was to go to town to have my hairs clipped. I then arrived just in time at Horgen to meet a couple of colleagues who wanted to swim across the lake of Zurich. After 2.5 km swimming we reached Feldmeilen and came back on the accompanying boats. Then we had a barbecue together, and it was already nine o'clock when i was finally back home. With a cut in a toe (done on the shore) and still everything to pack for the tour.

After all, i was able to start at half past six the next morning. The weather was nice and it became warmer and warmer. I first rode to Zurich, then along the lake. The stage was almost flat as it continued along rivers and lakes. My route was also more or less parallel to highways, and this is a good point since most of the traffic is there rather than on the normal road. It is only after Bludenz, already in Austria, that this changed. There were a lot of cars (week-end tourism) and the road started to climb a bit. I was getting tired. The valley of Montafon is very touristic and the Austrians are very well organised: all along the roads you find not only hotels but also "bed and breakfast" with clear signs indicating if free or occupied. It was therefore easy to find a place to rest for the night.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Oetwil a.d.L.	0	420	
Geroldswil	1	400	
Höngg (Zürich)	7	430	30
Altstetten (Zürich)	10	400	
Pfäffikon	46	420	20
Lachen	52	410	
Siebnen	56	450	40
Buttikon	61	420	
Reichenburg	63	440	20
Allmeind (Bilten)	66	420	
Oberbilten	68	450	30
Rüti (Bilten)	69	420	
Mülital	81	460	40
Mühlehorn	82	420	
Mels	108	490	70
Vaduz	126	460	
Möliholz	128	470	10
Schaan	130	450	
Forstwald	131	470	20
Äscher	133	450	
Nendeln	134	470	20
Nendeln	135	450	
Tisis	139	500	50
Feldkirch	141	460	
Bludenz	163	570	110
St. Anton	169	640	70
St. Anton	170	620	
Gaschurn	191	970	350
total	191		880



Stage 2 (18 July 1994): Gaschurn - Bielerhöhe - Reschen - Sta Maria

After a good night and a good breakfast, i felt in good shape to finally climb the first pass of this tour. Both the Arlberg and the Silvretta road (over the Bielerhöhe) link Bludenz with Landeck. Since the Arlberg is a shorter and better way for transit, there is not much more than touristic traffic over the Bielerhöhe. The climbing was only disturbed by the presence of irresistible wild strawberries along the road. I also stopped at the top to look at the dam, at the lake and at the technical information about this hydroelectrical complex.

The Paznaun valley, on the other side of the pass, was simply beautiful. I enjoyed the ride very much... down to the point where the road joins the Arlberg way. About Landeck i mainly remember the heavy traffic and the red lights. The ride along the Inn valley was also mostly on the main road. I came again close to Switzerland but took rather up to the left towards Nauders and Italy. Before reaching the Reschen / Resia pass and the border, however, i had to stop to protect myself from a thunderstorm. It was still raining a little bit when i hit the road again. I saw the famous church tower in the lake, the only visible part of a village submerged after the construction of a dam. It rained heavily again before i had reached Mals / Malles. Then i stopped to drink a tea at a restaurant. It help, but i was still cold when i set again into saddle. My leg muscles were aching, and this did not get much better even when i was climbing again towards Müstair. I was now back in Switzerland. There was just one bed left at the Hotel Alpina at Santa Maria. Enough for me.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Gaschurn	0	970	
Partenen	3	1030	60
Vermunttdamm	12	1740	710
Bielerhöhe	19	2040	300
Engadiner Hütte	21	1870	
Wirl	28	1630	
Tschafein	31	1540	
Aussertschafein	32	1550	10
Ebene (Ischgl)	43	1270	
Ulmicher Wald	44	1290	20
See	57	1030	
Trisannabrücke	62	860	
Pians	63	900	40
Landeck	68	790	
Ried	84	880	90
Pfunds	99	970	90
Rauth	102	990	20
Nauders	112	1340	350
Passo di Rèsia	118	1510	170
S. Valentino	128	1470	
Burgüσιο	137	1210	
S. Cesario (Laüdes)	143	950	
Tubre	150	1240	290
Sta Maria	156	1380	140
total	156		2290



Stage 3 (19 July 1994): Sta Maria - Stelvio - Umbrail - Sta Maria

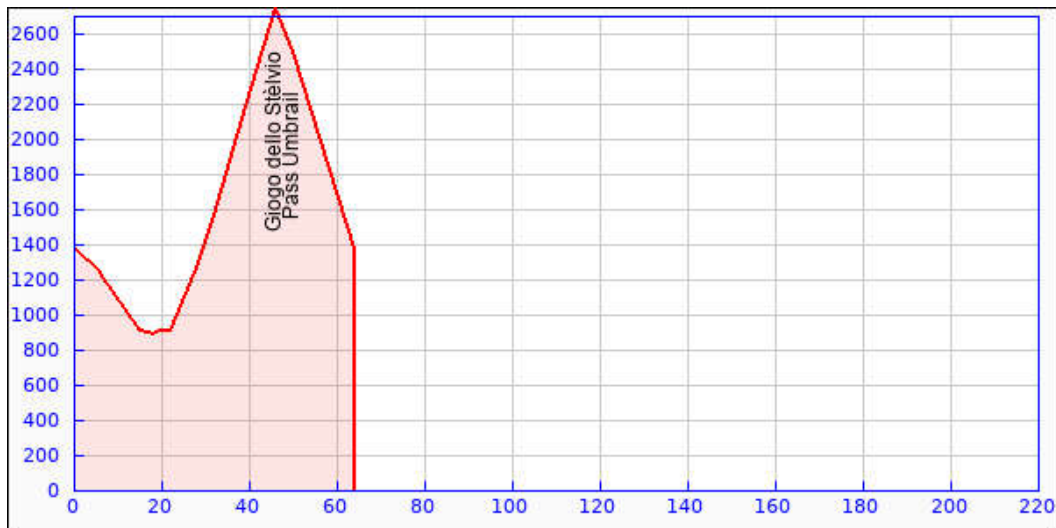
The third stage was designed as a round-trip with just one pass. Not any pass, however: the Stelvio. There had been more thunderstorms during the night and the sky was still very cloudy when i hit the road. I had first to ride down back to the Val Venosta / Vinschgau. After a flat stretch in this valley, i arrived at Prato, at the foot of the Stelvio. From this point there are 1850 m to climb to the pass. The road has some 40 hairpin curves from Trafoi on. These curves are marked by numbered roadside stones. The elevation is usually also indicated, helping bikers to control their progression to the top. I passed several groups of cyclists. Unfortunately, some were followed by cars. One of them didn't stop to pass me, wait, pass me again etc. etc. Apart of this lasting one there were only few cars over the pass.

It was still cloudy and cool, a good weather for climbing. The countdown of the curves was accelerating because they came closer and closer. I didn't make any stop before reaching the top. There i drank a tea, tried to dry myself a bit (sweat and cold wind don't match well!) and bought some postcards. On all these postcards it was written that the Stelvio is the highest pass in Europe. This is obviously not true if you count also passes with non-paved tracks. And even then, the Italians forgot about the French pass Col de la Bonette, which is 44 m higher.

After the short descent to the Umbrail i found the border closed. At the customs, they told me that a landslide had occurred and that the road down to Sta. Maria was being repaired. After a short discussion, it was decided that i could just go around that place pushing my bike; and they let me go.

During the afternoon it rained again. But i was back at the hotel in Sta. Maria.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Sta Maria	0	1380	
Tubre	6	1240	
Glurns / Glorenza	15	910	
Schacht	18	890	
Montechiaro	19	910	20
Prato	22	910	
Gomagoi	28	1270	360
Trafoi	32	1570	300
Franzenhöhe	39	2190	620
Giogo dello Stelvio	46	2760	570
Pass Umbrail	50	2500	
Sta Maria	64	1380	
total	64		1870



Stage 4 (21 July 1994): Sta Maria - Umbrail - Foscagno - Bernina - Albula - Preda

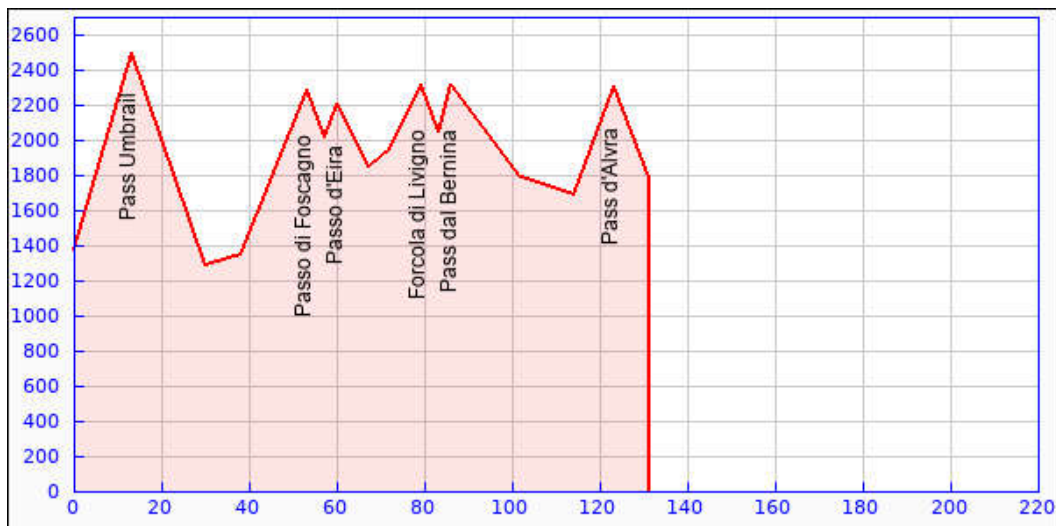
I took a day of rest before this stage. We went hiking with Ruedi, a colleague of mine (whose parents are from Sta. Maria), his wife and their child. And it rained again. When i left again by bike the weather was getting better. I was glad because i planned a big stage, with five passes higher than 2000 m. The first one was the Umbrail, where i came down two days before. Its road is not paved on a stretch of several kilometers. This is, however, not a big problem because the gravel is fine and not too bad for the tires. No puncture to report. When i arrived at the top i had climbed (really this time, not like from the Stelvio) the highest pass of Switzerland that can be done by race bike.

Riding down to Bormio was not very funny because the road was not good. Many potholes and tunnels without light. Anyway, i came down safely and went towards the next pass: the Foscagno. The climb was first very gentle (but long) and then became a bit steeper. There was some traffic, including trucks. The worst ones are those you cannot see. I mean those you cannot see behind the cloud of fumes they produce! Between Foscagno and Passo d'Eira the road does not lose much in elevation. It does not even go below 2000 m. Once on the first, you are therefore almost already on the second of these passes. Almost.

The region around Livigno is a duty-free zone. You notice it immediately at the numerous alcohol-cigarettes-and-perfume-shops. Don't try to go there by bike during the week-end: gasoline is also much cheaper, and this obviously attracts many many cars. Coming from the Passo d'Eira i did not have to ride into Livigno. Instead i took to the left towards the fourth pass of the day, Forcola di Livigno. It was the afternoon and it was rather warm, despite of the elevation. I began to feel tired, but the climb was not too long. When i arrived at the top i was back in Switzerland. The customs, however, are further down, just before the crossing with the Bernina road. The Bernina was to be the last pass of the day, even if i cheated a bit by starting from above 2000 m. I felt anyway very good when i had done this short and easy climb: the fifth pass was done.

After a pause at the pass i began to ride down to Pontresina. Broad road, not steep, just let yourself roll down! When i saw the big hotels of Pontresina, with all the tourists around the place, i did not feel so good. The landscape was brown and grey because it was dry. I did not like this either. Well, then why stop here? I decided to ride a bit further. And, without thinking much about it, i just swallowed a sixth pass (all over 2000 m): the Albula. I was more or less in an euphorical mood, no longer feeling any pain or fatigue. That's how i reached the pass. Then i stopped at the first hotel down from the Albula. It was at Preda.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Sta Maria	0	1380	
Pass Umbrail	13	2500	1120
Molina (Bòrmio)	30	1290	
Isolaccia	38	1350	60
Passo di Foscagno	53	2290	940
Madona del Soccorso	57	2020	
Passo d'Eira	60	2210	190
S. Rocco	67	1850	
Alpe Campaccio	72	1950	100
Forcola di Livigno	79	2320	370
La Motta	83	2050	
Pass dal Bernina	86	2320	270
Pontresina	102	1790	
La Punt	114	1690	
Pass d'Alvra	123	2310	620
Preda	131	1790	
total	131		3670



Stage 5 (22 July 1994): Preda - Davos - Leuggelbach

There is still a long ride down from Preda. Unfortunately the road is no longer good and its surface is very irregular. If this is not important while riding up, it is hard or even dangerous while riding down. At Bergün I almost had an accident. A boy was running on the pavement (US English: sidewalk) when I approached. I thought that he may want to cross the street and was therefore ready to brake. And actually he crossed just in front of my wheel. I had no time to do anything, even if I had envisioned this situation. Fortunately I just didn't hit him. Sometimes the noise of an engine would be better than the silence of a bike...

When I arrived at Filisur I still had to ride further down along the valley in order to pick up the street that climbs on the other side towards Davos. To add more useless climbing, this road goes down again between Wiesen and the Landwasser tunnel. This tunnel is almost 3 km long. Uphill. Not a nice ride by bike. I therefore decided to take the way along the river. It is actually prohibited to any traffic and is not very well paved, but still much preferable to the tunnel!

The ride up to Davos was nice, first between steep rocks, then in a broadening valley with more pastures. From Davos, the road goes along the small lake of Wolfgang, then over the pass of the same name. The descent to the Prättigau valley is cut by a short climb at Klosters and by some flat stretches. The steeper stretches allow interesting speeds. Once in the valley, however, I still had the second half of the stage to ride, almost completely flat and much less interesting.

When I finally entered the Linth valley (canton of Glarus), I was able to take advantage of tail wind. This is a common feature of alpine valleys that the wind blows uphill during the afternoon when the weather is good (I don't want to bother you with the thermodynamics behind this). I therefore continued to the town of Glarus and then looked for a place to stay. I was really surprised to be out of town again before seeing any hotel. Not willing to ride back I decided to ride on. Once there was a sign indicating a free room, but when I went there they told me that it was actually already rented and that, no, they don't change the sign in this case. What a service, especially compared to what I saw a couple of days before in Austria! Finally I found a room in a very small hotel at Leuggelbach. The room service had not yet been done because the room maid had her free afternoon. She finally arrived... just when I was coming out of the shower.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Preda	0	1790	
Bravuogn	7	1370	
Filisur	15	1010	
Alvaneu Bad	19	940	
Wiesen	30	1440	500
Landwasser-Zügen	34	1240	
Davos Platz	48	1560	320
Wolfgangpass	54	1630	70
Brügglen	61	1180	
Klosters Platz	62	1210	30
Saas i. P.	71	990	
Küblis	74	820	
Landquart	96	530	
Walenstadt	125	430	
Mühlehorn	137	420	
Mülital	138	460	40
Gäsi (Filzbach)	142	420	
Ennenda	157	470	50
Höf	159	520	50
Mitlödi	160	500	
Nidfurn	165	580	80
Leuggelbach	166	550	
total	166		1140



Stage 6 (23 July 1994): Leuggelbach - Klausen - Oetwil a.d.L.

There was a further surprise at that hotel. I had asked if it was possible to pay by credit card and had been told that it was. When i asked for the bill, however, the lady of the hotel did not really know what a credit card was. I had only three or four swiss francs left, but finally the boss decided to accept to be paid in italian lira (i still had enough of them from the previous stages).

The first part of the ride was a good warm-up: up along the valley towards Linthal. Then the things became more serious with the steep (but beautiful) climb towards the high valley of Urnerboden. Once there, it is possible to relax a bit because the slope is very gentle for a couple of kilometers. This gives a good opportunity to appreciate the landscape, especially the great rocky barrier on the north-west side of the valley: magnificent in the morning sun!

Then the climb to the Klausen pass went on. The road was again steep and winding. This pass is really one of the most beautiful i know. And i am not the only one to like it, according to the number of bikers and motorbikers seen on the road. It was Saturday and the traffic was increasing when i reached the pass. After a well deserved stop, i hit the road again towards Altdorf. It is a long and fast ride down. Some stretches are cut in almost vertical rocks. Vertiginous!

As i reached Altdorf i still had some 90 km to ride, obviously less exciting than the Klausen. The heat and exhaustion were slowly getting their toll on me. After the climb to the small lake Türlensee i made a last stop at Aeugstertal. Paul, a lab technician who was working in our research project, lives there. I was glad to get something cold to drink from him. After talking a bit about my bike tour with Paul and his wife Olga, i went on towards Oetwil an der Limmat.

This had been one of my most beautiful tours but i was glad to get back home. To relax... and to review the great memories gained during this week.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Leuggelbach	0	550	
Linthal	8	660	110
Hinter Stafel	19	1310	650
Port (Urnerboden)	22	1370	60
Klausenpass	31	1950	580
Unterschächen	44	1000	
Derelen (Spiringen)	45	1050	50
Altdorf	58	460	
Flüelen	61	440	
Tellsplatte	65	510	70
Schiferen (Morschach)	69	440	
Wolfsprung	71	490	50
Brunnen	73	440	
Lücken (Schwyz)	78	480	40
Seewen	79	450	
Bernerhöchi	86	560	110
Arth	90	420	
Baar	107	440	20
Tüfenbach	116	670	230
Türlen	117	650	
Habersaat	119	670	20
Birmensdorf	133	470	
Ristet (Birmensdorf)	134	490	20
Dietikon	140	390	
Oetwil a.d.L.	144	420	30
total	144		2040

