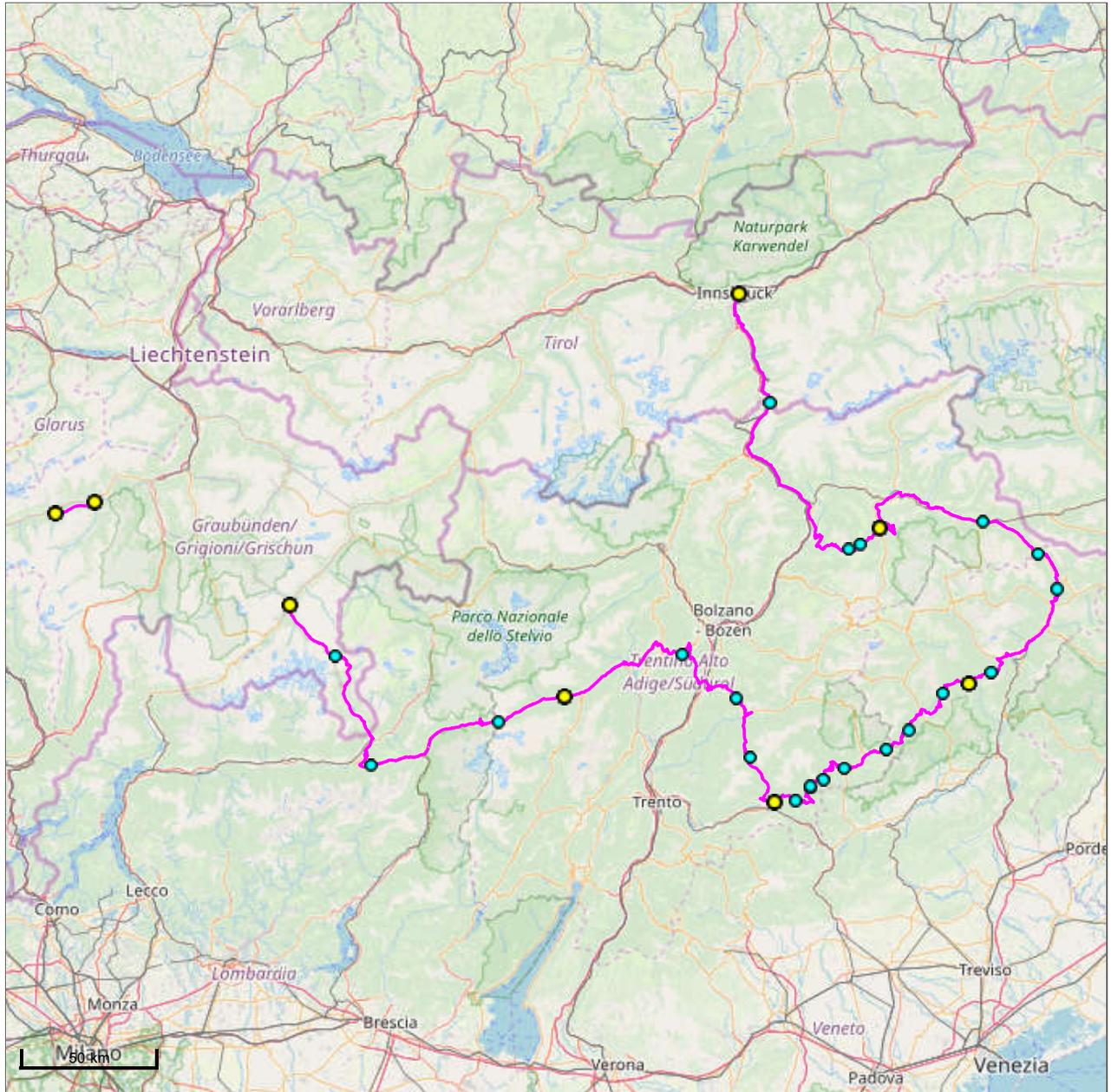
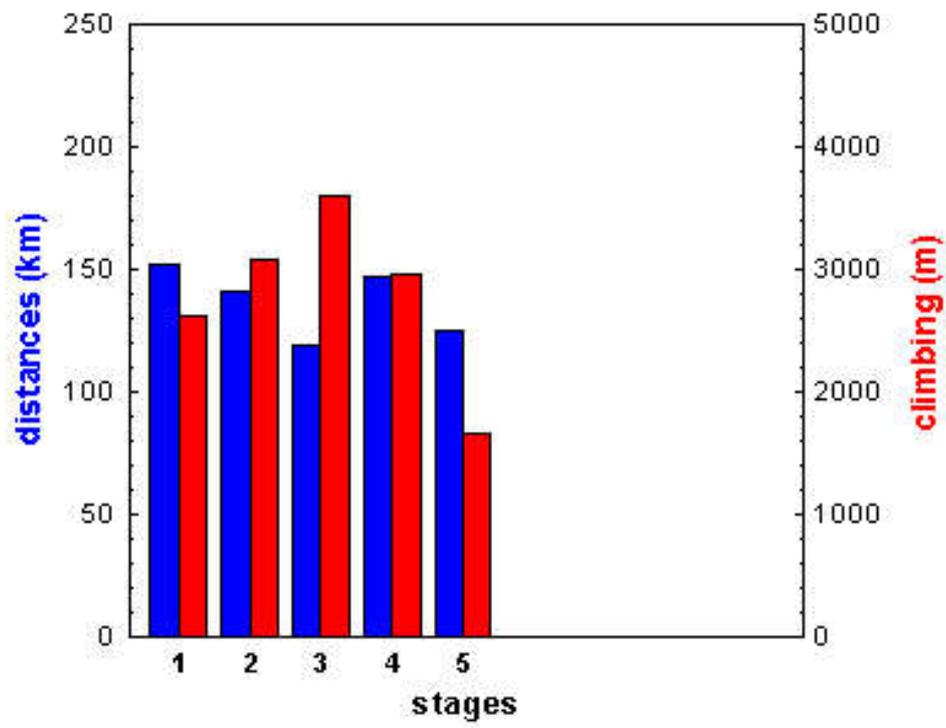


Bicycle tour 1997, 21 - 25 July

Patrick Schleppei

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Giraniga - Ilanz + Samedan - Bernina - Tonale - Mezzana	152	2650
Mezzana - Méndola - Mánghen - Strigno	141	3110
Strigno - Brocon - Cereda - Duran - Forno di Zoldo	119	3540
Forno di Zoldo - Cibiana - Monte Croce - Rina/Welschellen	147	3030
Rina/Welschellen - Würzjoch - Brenner - Innsbruck	125	1730
total	684	14060





San Lugano, the church at the pass

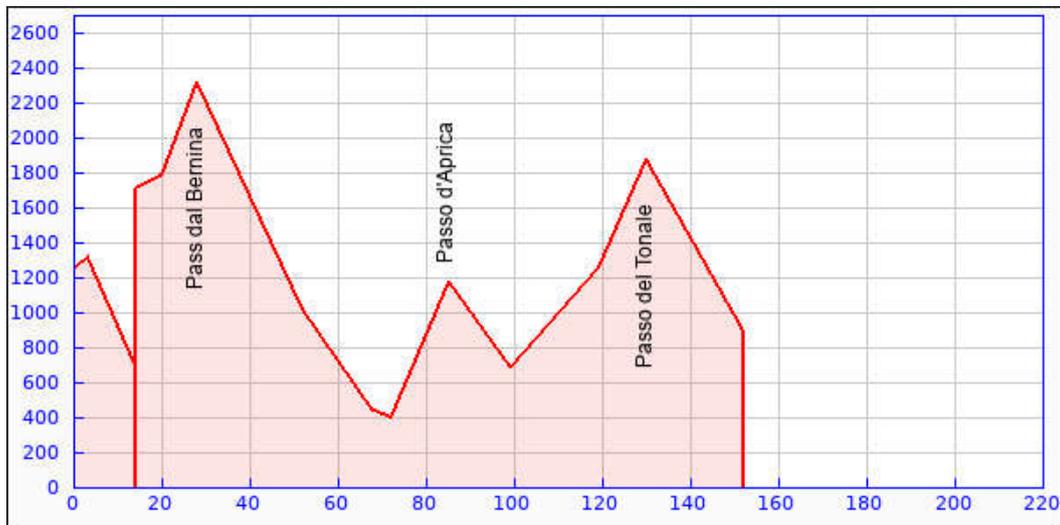
Stage 1 (21 July 1997): Giraniga - Ilanz + Samedan - Bernina - Tonale - Mezzana

The main goal of this 1997 tour was to ride some passes in the Dolomites. In order to do an interesting one-week tour it was obvious that i would have to take the train for part of the way. I started from Obersaxen-Giraniga (Grisons) where the parents of my girlfriend Catrina have a vacation house. I wanted to take the first train from Ilanz and therefore got up already at five o'clock. This left me enough time for a rich breakfast. I reached the train at Ilanz as well as the connection towards Samedan. I must admit that i was still very sleepy during this train trip (after a short new- moon night, if you know what i mean...) and missed some of the superb landscapes along the Rhine and Albula valleys.

Up at Samedan it was still chilly and i was glad that i had to ride first uphill as a warm-up. At about half past eight i was on the way towards the Bernina pass. Glaciers and snow on the Piz Bernina were blinding white and gave the mountain a very impressive look. The road over the pass is good, broad and not steep. The slope down to Poschiavo was nice. Further down in this italian-speaking valley of the Grisons, however, the traffic was rather important and nervous.

After crossing the border, i reached Tirano and had to ride a while along the main road of the Veltina valley. Dangerous. I therefore did not like the Veltina as much as some of its wines. Soon i took to the left towards Aprica and was out of the big road again. All the remaining of the stage was on good roads because they had been repaved before the Giro d'Italia 97. There were two passes along the way to the east: Aprica and Tonale. The first one may not be high, but it starts from a low valley and goes through a really mountainous landscape. Passo del Tonale was no big problem either. The slope down the Val Vermiglio was also very nice. The region is touristic and i stopped at an hotel when i reached Mezzana. I was early enough to watch the stage of the Tour de France on television. Marco Pantani won at Morzine after a fabulous climb.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Giraniga	0	1250	
Meierhof	3	1320	70
Ilanz	14	700	
>>> Samedan	14	1710	
Pontresina	20	1790	80
Pass dal Bernina	28	2320	530
Poschiavo	52	1020	
Madonna di Tirano	68	440	
Stazzona	72	400	
Passo d'Aprica	85	1180	780
Èdolo	99	690	
Ponte di Legno	119	1260	570
Passo del Tonale	130	1880	620
Mezzana	152	900	
total	152		2650



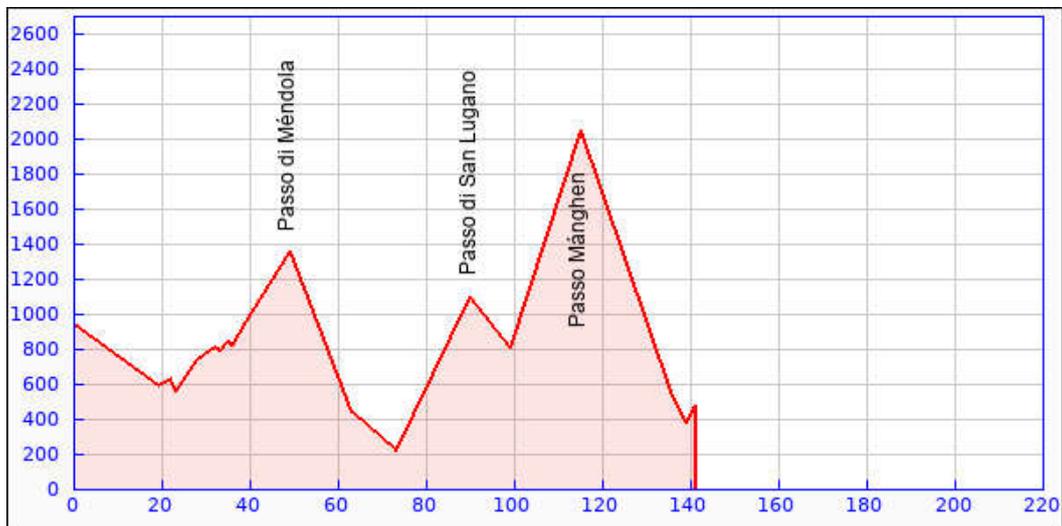
Stage 2 (22 July 1997): Mezzana - Méndola - Mánghen - Strigno

The weather for this second stage was nice and warm. I had to wait till eight o'clock for the breakfast to be served at the hotel. I rode along the Val del Sole ("sun valley") and then on a broad plateau over it. The forests, streams and lakes as well as the numerous orchards made a very attractive landscape. From the town of Fondo i climbed to the Mendola pass. It has also a german name (Mendel) as it is on the border to the region of Südtirol which belonged to Austria till World War I. The descent was very nice and i had to review my judgement about italian roads: in that region i saw almost only roads in good or very good state.

From Kaltern / Caldaro to Auer / Ora i crossed the valley of the Etsch / Adige and its orchards and vineyards. Then i had to climb again to a very nice valley with meadows and woods. I was glad to find the cold fountain of Kaltenbrunn / Fontanefredde to refill my bottles. After San Lugano the road went down to the Val di Fiemme which i crossed towards the Manghen pass. This is one of the most beautiful passes i've ever ridden. The road is narrow but good and there is very few traffic. The first part is all in the forest and i appreciated its shaddow. Overall i saw very few bikers during this tour. Here, however, i was caught up by a local cyclist. It was good to speak to somebody, even if my italian is very poor, and we went on together up to the end of the woods. Then i was no longer able to keep his pace (he did not ride so far and had no bag on his bike).

The last part of the climb was in alpine meadows. Steep but extremely beautiful. While riding down on the other side i saw the road i wanted to take the next day. It was not far at all but on the other side of a deep valley. No crossing by bike! I had to ride down to Strigno and take a room in a (cheap but not too bad) hotel.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Mezzana	0	940	
Mostizzolo	19	590	
Scanna	22	630	40
Ponte S. Gallo	23	560	
Romallo	28	740	180
Arsio	32	810	70
Brez	33	790	
Vigna	35	850	60
Birreria	36	820	
Fondo	39	960	140
Passo di Méndola	49	1360	400
Caldaro	63	440	
Adigio (Ora)	73	220	
Passo di San Lugano	90	1100	880
Molina	99	810	
Passo Mánghen	115	2050	1240
Telve	136	530	
Scurelle	139	380	
Strigno	141	480	100
total	141		3110

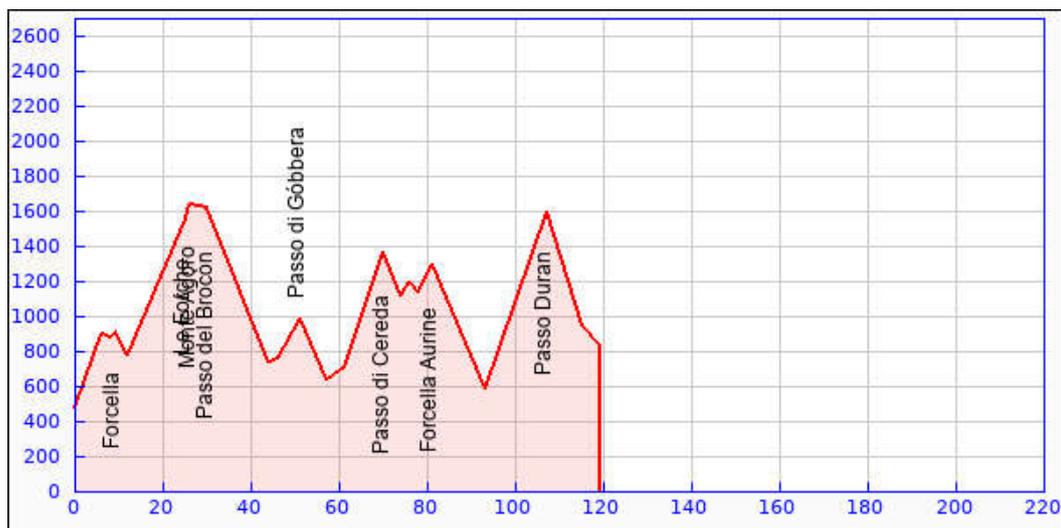


Stage 3 (23 July 1997): Strigno - Brocon - Cereda - Duran - Forno di Zoldo

My first idea was to begin this third stage with the Passo Cinque Croci ("five crosses"). But somebody at the hotel told me that 5 km at the top were not surfaced. This sounded to me (with my race bike) a bit as having to carry five crosses. Then i decided to ride over the [Passo del Brocòn](#), which is less high but leads to the same point. There was almost no traffic on that road and i was able to enjoy the landscape with its narrow deep valleys, steep forests and green meadows. It was only around Fiera that i encountered numerous cars and lorries. I had almost no stretch of flat road on that day, even less than during the rest of this tour.

The next passes were [Cereda](#), [Aurine](#) and [Duran](#). I feared a bit the last one because it meant climbing again 1000 m at the end of the day. Since i paid attention to drinking and eating during the day (excellent soup at the Cereda!) everything went just perfectly. I almost wanted to ride further than planned, but the lady at Forno's touristical information told me that there was no hotel on the way to Cibiana. And riding so far would have been too much.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Strigno	0	480	
Pradellano	6	900	420
Lago di Pradellano	8	880	
Forcella	9	910	30
I Molini (Tesino)	12	780	
Le Forche	25	1560	780
Monte Ágoro	26	1640	80
Passo del Brocòn	30	1620	
Fosse Ronco	44	740	
Canal S. Bovo	46	760	20
Passo di Góbbèra	51	990	230
Imèr	57	640	
Fiera	61	710	70
Passo di Cereda	70	1370	660
Mis	74	1120	
Masoch	76	1200	80
Gosaldo	78	1140	
Forcella Aurine	81	1300	160
Valcozzena (Ágordo)	93	590	
Passo Duran	107	1600	1010
Dont	115	950	
Forno di Zoldo	119	840	
total	119		3540



Stage 4 (24 July 1997): Forno di Zoldo - Cibiana - Monte Croce - Rina/Welschellen

After a thunderstorm the evening before, the roads were still wet this morning. The stage started right away with a pass, the Cibiana. Nice little climb, mainly in the woods. Then, between Venas and Auronzo, i was riding along the valleys and there was a more important traffic. At least the roads were still quite good (there is nothing so difficult as avoinding pot holes while being passed by a truck... and its swinging trailer).

It was getting warm when i started to climb to San Antonio, that is to the Passo del Zovo. I stopped at the pass to drink and had the opportunity to talk with people from Switzerland (hikers, not bikers). After a short descent it went up again to the Kreuzberg / Monte Croce pass. It is not steep at all. It began to rain when i was riding down. For a short time i was in a thunderstorm, but then the rain receeded. There was much more traffic after Innichen / San Candido. Thanks to the downhill slope i reached Bruneck / Brunico in a reasonable time. Then, however, i lost time because of a mistake. I did not look precisely enough at my map to see that at a particular point two roads were almost joining but not really. The distance was only a matter of 200 m ... horizontally but also vertically. This lead me further than intended to St. Vigil / S. Vigilio. I had to come back down to Zwischenwasser / Longega before being able to attack the next climb. Because it was raining again, i chose to stop at the next possible place along the road. This happened to be at Welschellen / Rina. It was a nice little Gasthaus and the meal was according to my appetite: this is seldom enough to be mentioned.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Forno di Zoldo	0	840	
Socampo	1	810	
Passo Cibiana	11	1530	720
Ponte la Chiusa	21	770	
Venàs	22	860	90
Valle	27	820	
Pieve	31	880	60
Vallesella	35	740	
Val di Croce (Domegge)	38	810	70
Lozzo	41	720	
S. Caterina	48	830	110
Passo del Zovo	56	1480	650
Padola	61	1200	
Passo di Monte Croce	72	1640	440
S. Candido	87	1170	
Sella di Dobbiaco	91	1210	40
Brunico	119	820	
Brach (Marebbe)	134	1300	480
Longega	143	1000	
Rina	147	1370	370
total	147		3030



Stage 5 (25 July 1997): Rina/Welschellen - Würzjoch - Brenner - Innsbruck

I wanted to start early from Welschellen / Rina in order to catch the afternoon train from Innsbruck to Zurich. Fortunately i got a breakfast already at seven at the hotel. At half past seven i was on my bike. I was glad that the climb to the Würzjoch / Passo di Erbe was no longer as steep as the first part ridden the day before. The sky was overcast and the temperature ideal for climbing. The next pass (Kofeljoch / Passo di Eores) was no big deal from that side. Then there was a long nice descent towards Brixen / Bressanone. It was the last opportunity to really enjoy the beautiful and well kept landscapes of South Tirol. The rest of the stage was indeed along the Brenner road and there is not much to tell about it: traffic, head wind and (on the italian side) road works. I arrived at Innsbruck early enough to write the draft of the day's report before taking the train to Zurich, where Catrina was waiting for me. This had been a nice tour in a region i didn't know before. It is on purpose that i rode around rather than into the central part of the Dolomites. I was thus able to largely avoid roads with heavy traffic. And this leaves me some high and famous Dolomite passes for a next time...

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Welschellen	0	1370	
Rié	2	1450	80
Rü	4	1340	
Antermëia	6	1510	170
Würzjoch	11	2000	490
Gunggan	14	1810	
Kofeljoch	16	1860	50
St. Anton (Palmschoss)	22	1570	
Palmschoss	25	1690	120
Brixen	41	560	
Sterzing	72	950	390
Brennerpass	87	1380	430
Steinach	100	1050	
Innsbruck	125	580	
total	125		1730

