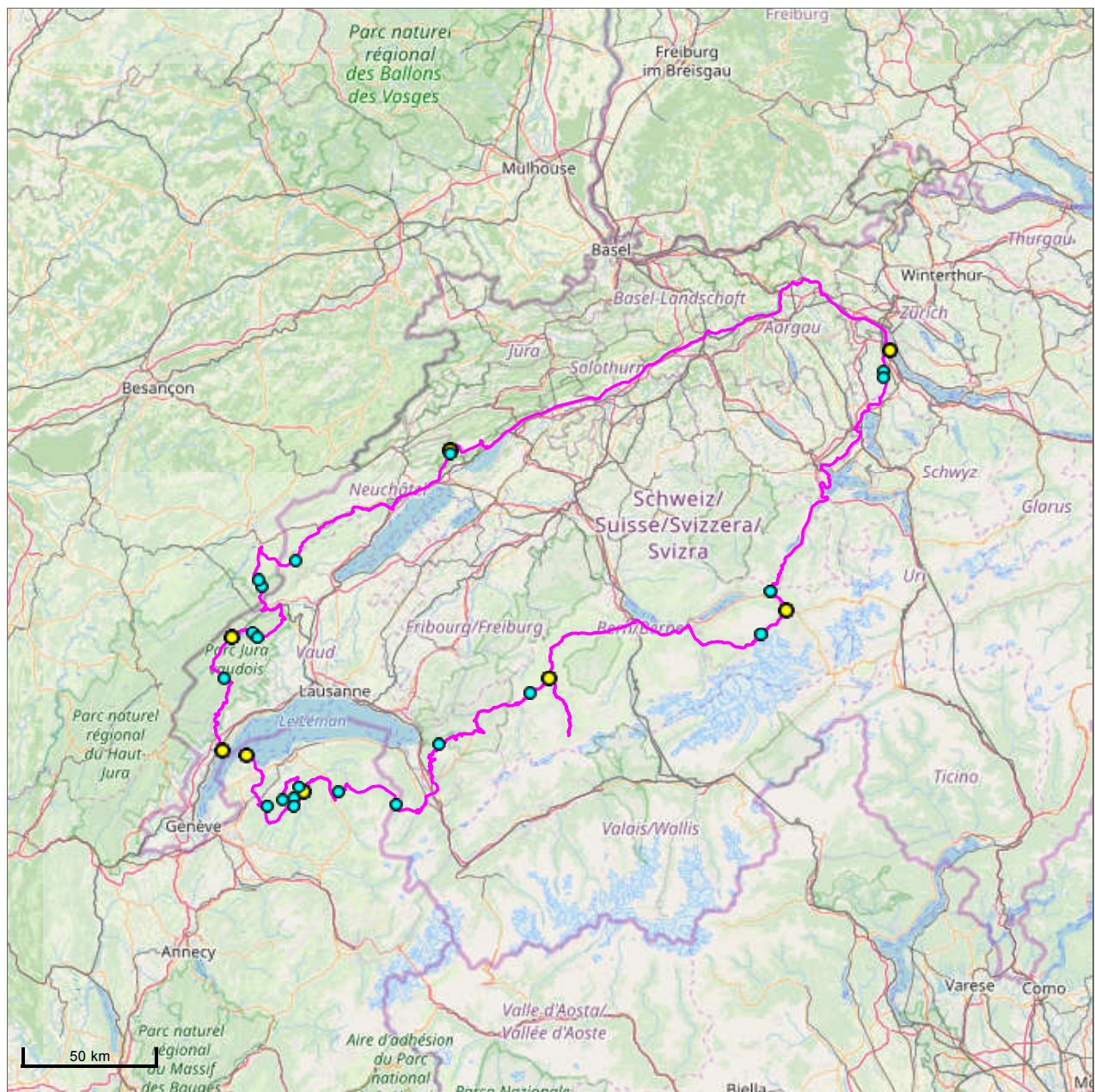
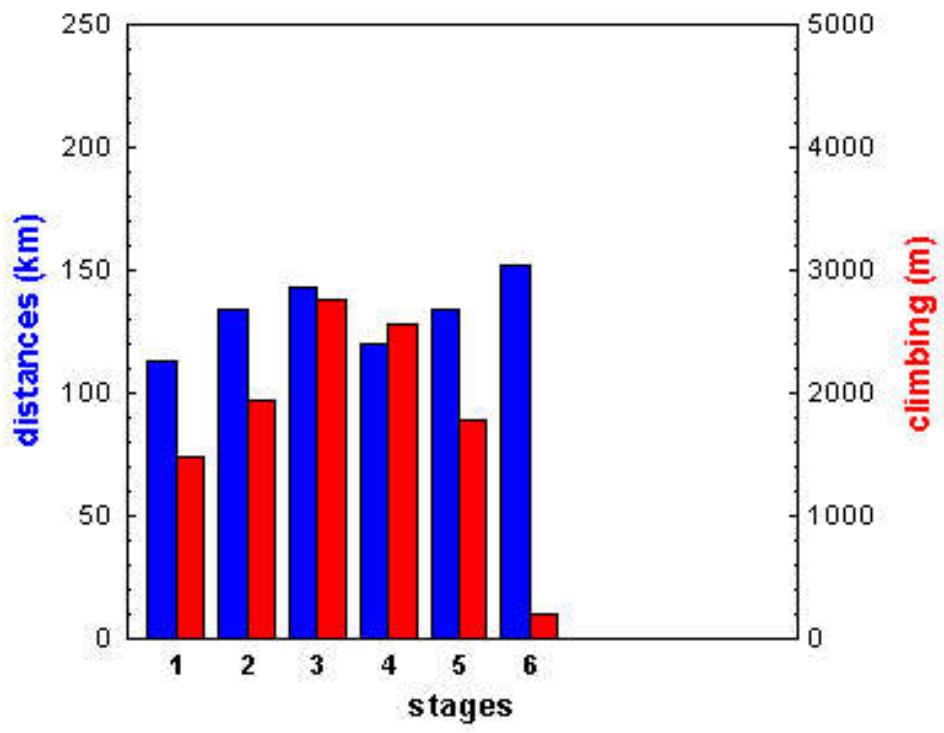


Bicycle tour 1998, 08 - 14 July

Patrick Schleppei

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Kilchberg - Luzern - Brünig - Meiringen	113	1410
Meiringen - Grosse Scheidegg - Interlaken - Zweisimmen	134	1950
Zweisimmen - Les Agites - Pas de Morgins - Lullin	143	2770
Lullin - Yvoire + Nyon - Marchairuz - Le Lieu	120	2560
Le Lieu - Mollendruz - Jougne - Les Étroits - Lignières	134	1710
Lignières - Bienne - Solothurn - Aarau - Kilchberg	152	240
total	796	10640





Pas de Morgins and the homonymous lake

Stage 1 (8 July 1998): Kilchberg - Luzern - Brünig - Meiringen

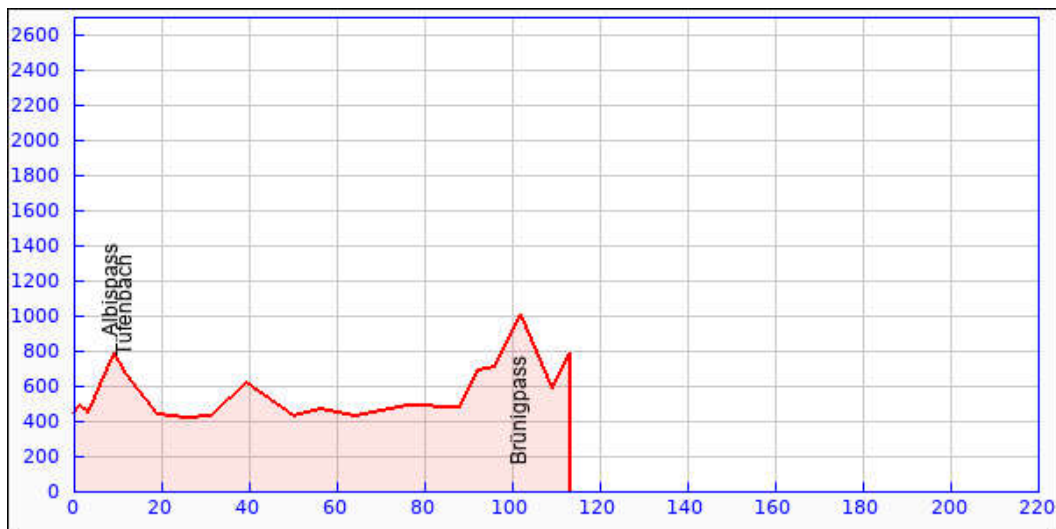
The weather forecasts were unfortunately correct: polar air had hit Switzerland during the night. It was unseasonably cold and it had snowed below 2000 m. No weather to start a bike tour. On the other hand, i really wanted to combine my 1998 tour with watching the tennis tournament of Gstaad for which we already had tickets. So i rode off towards Meiringen, but not over the Susten pass as first planned.

After the first small pass of the tour (the old-known Albis), i took towards Zug. Then i decided to avoid the main road to Lucerne and its heavy traffic, but this meant some hills to climb before riding down to the Lake of Four Cantons. I finally reached Lucerne around 11 o'clock and continued along the lake. Just when i was leaving it behind me, it started to rain. I took this as an opportunity to stop at a restaurant at Alpnachstad to eat a soup and a plate of pasta. I already knew the region from my service in the Swiss Air Force. I also knew the remaining of the stage from my tour 1993 but this time the weather was different. My legs didn't have a good output with these chilly temperatures.

At the beginning of the climb to the Brünig pass, i met another cyclist. He was from San Diego, California. We climbed together and, since it was still cold, we took a

tee together at the pass. After chatting a bit, we set off again, but in different directions. I rode to Meiringen. Fortunately the road was not too wet and it was still a pleasure to speed down. After crossing Meiringen (also known from my military service), i just started to climb on the other side of the valley but soon stopped at a small and cheap hotel. It was near to the Reichenbach falls, well known to all Conan Doyle's readers as the place where Sherlock Holmes fell and died after a fight with his enemy Moriarty.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Oberer Mönchhof (Kilchberg)	0	450	
Kilchberg	1	490	40
Adliswil	3	450	
Albispass	9	790	340
Tüfenbach	12	670	
Blickensdorf	19	440	
Cham	25	420	
Rotkreuz	31	430	10
Udligenswil	39	620	190
Luzern	50	430	
Kastanienbaum	56	470	40
Hergiswil	64	430	
Kägiswil	76	490	60
Giswil	88	480	
Kaiserstuhl	92	690	210
Lungern	96	710	20
Brünigpass	102	1010	300
Meiringen	109	590	
Schwendi (Meiringen)	113	790	200
total	113		1410



Stage 2 (9 July 1998): Meiringen - Grosse Scheidegg - Interlaken - Zweisimmen

For the second stage, the weather was better but there was no warm-up for the legs: the road climbed steeply from the start on. If you ever want to ride over the Grosse Scheidegg like me, then just some warnings. First it's steep, sometimes around 20%, and you should not expect to ride much over 10 km/h. Second there are unpaved places but the gravel is fine and you can still ride with a race bike. Third the landscape is of breathtaking beauty: wild stream, forests, pastures, high mountains and a glacier. The best is that the road is closed to private motor vehicles. A cold wind was biting me as i was approaching the pass but it soon became warmer as i began to ride down to Grindelwald. I rode through the famous and crowded station and headed towards Interlaken.

Once i had the bad idea to follow a road sign for bikes. For the hundredth time i swore never again to do this: after a while it lead me right onto a gravel road. Fortunately i did not get any puncture but it completely spoiled the pleasure of the descent. My experience with special signs for bikes is a disaster. Usually, such signs lead you to either one of the following situations:

- to a gravel road;
- to a crossing where you have the choice between 'route A' and 'route B' (but nobody tells you where these roads go);
- to the place where you started (it's a round-trip, sorry);
- or, in the best case, to your goal... but over a detour or over a steep hill (while the main road is straight and flat).

To be just i ought to add that the 9 new bike routes across Switzerland appear to be better marked (red signs with white-on-blue numbers).

Along the south shore of the Lake of Thun, there is not much choice about the route to take. The landscape was nice but the ride not very interesting. After Spiez, i took towards the Simmental. I ignored all bike signs and remained on the main road. Too much traffic, but at least a paved road. I stopped at Boltigen to eat a soup and bread. It took almost half an hour to get the order. Did anybody tell anything about bernese people being slow?

I left my small baggage at the hotel as i reached Zweisimmen. From there i made a small ride to the place my family originally comes from: Lenk im Simmental. I went even a little further, till there was no longer any surfaced road. I just was able to see another mighty waterfall: the Iffigfall. Then i rode back to the hotel and waited for my dear Catrina and her dear father to arrive.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Schwendi (Meiringen)	0	790	
Rosenloui	7	1400	610
Grosse Scheidegg	15	1960	560
Grindelwald	25	1030	
Zweilütschinen	37	660	
Interlaken	44	560	
Leissigen	51	580	20
Faulensee	58	560	
Spiezwiler	62	660	100
Wimmis	65	630	
Därstetten	77	760	130
Weissenburg	79	740	
Reidenbach	89	840	100
Zweisimmen	98	950	110
Lenk	111	1060	110
Pöschenried	116	1270	210
Lenk	121	1060	
Zweisimmen	134	950	
total	134		1950

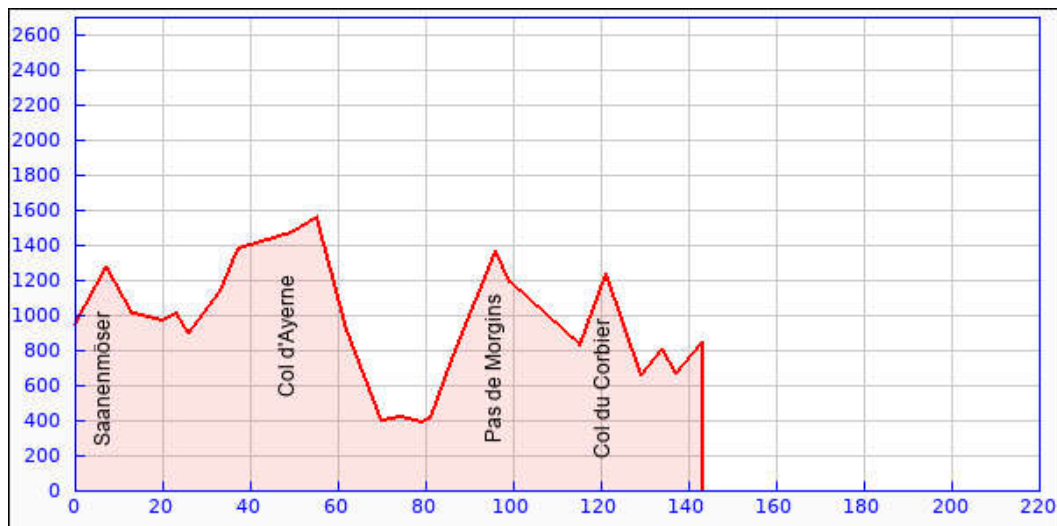


Stage 3 (11 July 1998): Zweisimmen - Les Agites - Pas de Morgins - Lullin

Friday had been a rest day as we went to watch the tennis quarter finals at Gstaad. On Saturday my bike tour resumed. The weather was cloudy again and rather chilly. Like three years earlier, for my tour 95, i went over the small pass of Saanenmöser. But then i rode west towards the Pays d'Enhaut. Strong head winds welcomed me there. At Château d'Oex, as i started to climb again, the road was wet and i feared some more rain. Fortunately, this did not happen. At La Lécherette, i took to the right instead of continuing to the Col des Mosses. I was entering a military zone, which road is open on Saturdays and Sundays. The whole zone is obviously very wild and i barely encountered anybody. Not even soldiers. Just a young donkey with his mother.

After Col d'Ayerne and the highest point of Les Agites, there is a 300-m-long tunnel. It is not lighted but there are holes through the rock bringing some daylight from the side. Since it is very narrow, traffics up and down are alternated. In the worst case, you may have to wait 3/4 of an hour. I let you imagine if, with my bicycle, i respected the rule... After the tunnel, the road was steep (but at least dry) and the curves very narrow. I was really glad to have good brakes. It was about noon as i arrived at Aigle. From the vineyards of Aigle, i crossed the Rhone valley to the industrial town of Monthey and started to climb to the Val d'Illeiez, a region i knew from ski holidays. It was now warm and, for the first time of the tour, i was really sweating. I climbed to the Pas de Morgins, a pass leading into french Haute- Savoie. Despite of head winds, i rode fast into the valley of Abondance. There was, however, still a pass on my program: the Corbier. The landscape was very nice and my legs weren't yet tired. I finally chose to stop at Lullin, just at the foot of another small pass... for the next day.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Zweisimmen	0	950	
Saanenmöser	7	1280	330
Saanen	13	1010	
Flendruz	20	970	
Les Borsalets	23	1010	40
Château-d'Oex	26	900	
L'Etivaz	33	1140	240
La Lécherette	37	1380	240
Col d'Ayerne	49	1470	90
Les Agites	55	1560	90
Corbeyrier	62	920	
Aigle	70	400	
St-Triphon	74	420	20
Collombey	79	390	
Monthey	81	420	30
Troistorrents	86	750	330
Pas de Morgins	96	1370	620
Châtel	99	1190	
La Solitude (Bonnevaux)	115	830	
Col du Corbier	121	1240	410
Pont de Gys	129	660	
La Vernaz	134	810	150
Le Brevon	137	670	
Lullin	143	850	180
total	143		2770



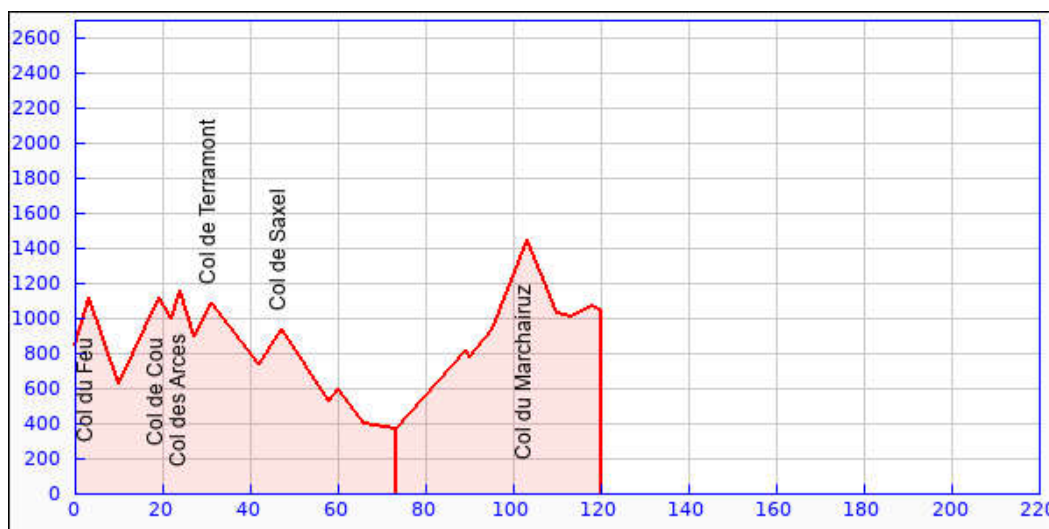
Stage 4 (12 July 1998): Lullin - Yvoire + Nyon - Marchairuz - Le Lieu

Lullin is not very far from the Lake Léman (Lake of Geneva); it is a region where the Alps are not so high as further south but charming. And there are so many roads over small passes and with few traffic that it's a dream for cyclists. It was not yet 11 o'clock when i had already done five passes: Col du Feu, Col de Cou, Col des Arces, Col de Terramont and Col de Saxel. None is very high, but all are nice rides, especially with the fair and not too hot weather i had. Then i rode down to the lake, arriving at Yvoire. It was Sunday and this very nice old little town was full of tourists. I bought a ticket for the ship across the lake and waited on a bank under a tree, chatting with another cyclist.

As the boat arrived at Nyon, i got on my bike again and started towards the Jura mountains. I was first riding across a landscape of fields, vineyards and orchards. Then there were fields and pastures and, still further uphill, pastures and forests. Unfortunately the forests did not shed much shadow and it was now rather too warm. Looking back, i was still able to see all the way i had taken from the Alps in Savoie, down to the lake and up to the Jura. I finally reached the highest pass of the day, the Marchairuz. The descent into the Vallée de Joux was nice even if some curves appeared a bit irregular and surprising to me. Riding on the left side of the lake (Lac de Joux), i reached Le Lieu on time.

I had announced my visit to friends of mine who live there and i met them: Sylvie, Michael "Murk" and their 15-month old son Matthias. We had time to go to the lake to take a swim. The water was still cold because of the elevation and because of the poor weather of the last week. We also went to the parents and sister of Sylvie. They had just finished to harvest hay and we celebrated this around a bottle of wine. It was therefore no longer so early as we went back. After supper, we watched the second half of the football final of the world championship.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Lullin	0	850	
Col du Feu	3	1120	270
Maugny	10	630	
Col de Cou	19	1120	490
Le Vernay	22	1000	
Col des Arces	24	1160	160
Les Courbes	27	900	
Col de Terramont	31	1090	190
Boège	42	740	
Col de Saxel	47	940	200
Loyer	58	530	
Les Crapons	60	600	70
Sciez	66	400	
Yvoire	73	370	
>>> Nyon	73	370	
Le Vaud	89	820	450
Les Bâmes (Marchissy)	90	780	
St-George	95	940	160
Col du Marchairuz	103	1450	510
Le Brassus	110	1030	
Le Sentier	113	1010	
Grand Sagne	118	1070	60
Le Lieu	120	1040	
total	120		2560



Stage 5 (13 July 1998): Le Lieu - Mollendruz - Jougne - Les Étroits - Lignières

I woke up early and took breakfast together with Murk and Matthias. Sylvie had got up even earlier and was already away for a business trip. The air was still chilly as i said goodbye and hit the road towards Le Pont and to the Col du Mollendruz. The pass is not steep at all and, from that side, there is not much to climb. Then i rode down to Romainmôtier, had a glance at the old monastery (11th century, roman style) and climbed again towards Vallorbe. Sure it was a detour, but i just wanted to once ride the Mollendruz. It was only a small road and i did not find it at once but a fellow cyclist helped me. Then, especially after crossing the border to France, i was riding on a main road with more traffic. It first went up to the town (and pass) of Jougne, then down towards Pontarlier. Before reaching this town, however, i took to the right and went up to Les Fourgs. All along the way i saw many french flags celebrating the victory of France at the football world championship. Even people having no flag had found a solution to show their happiness: three t-shirts hung on the balcony, one blue, one white and one red.

I soon reentered Switzerland and arrived at the Col des Étroits. This pass has not two but three roads leading to it. I did not ride to Sainte-Croix but to Buttes. Unlike the previous passes of the day, this was a real, fast downhill. Once in the Val de Travers, i found a fair tailwind which helped me to ride about 40 km/h. At Noiraigue, the valley becomes so narrow that the road goes up to the left side and into a tunnel. I preferred to take the small and winding road on the other side. Then, as i arrived down at Boudry, i tried to remain above the main road along the lake of Neuchâtel. This was perhaps not a good idea as i had to go several times up and down, but i finally reached well-known roads across Neuchâtel, towards Saint-Blaise and finally up to my parents at Les Prés sur Lignières. It was not yet 2 o'clock and i was lucky to be early: it soon began to rain.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Le Lieu	0	1040	
Le Pont	5	1010	
Pétra Félix	8	1140	130
Col du Mollendruz	10	1180	40
Romainmôtier	21	660	
Le Day	32	790	130
Vallorbe	34	750	
Col de Jougne	42	1030	280
Les Hôpitaux-Neufs	43	990	
Col des Hôpitaux	44	1030	40
La Gauffre	54	880	
La Coupe (Les Fourgs)	62	1140	260
Les Envers (L'Auberson)	67	1060	
Col des Étroits	69	1150	90
Buttes	78	770	
Noiraigue	96	720	
Derrière Cheseaux (Noiraigue)	97	790	70
Boudry	107	450	
Cormondrèche	112	550	100
Vauseyon	116	500	
Les Cadolles	118	580	80
Le Sordet	121	510	
La Coudre	122	550	40
St-Blaise	124	490	
Les Graverueles	133	940	450
Les Prés (Lignières)	134	920	
total	134		1710



Stage 6 (14 July 1998): Lignières - Bienne - Solothurn - Aarau - Kilchberg

The last stage was to ride back to Kilchberg. Basically, i had two options: either the direct way along the main roads, or some detour over more interesting regions. Since the first choice meant some 150 km and the second at least 30 more, i decided to take the boring but shorter way over Biel/Bienne, Solothurn, Olten, Aarau, Baden and Zurich. At least the wind was rather with me and i was able to ride with an average of 32 km/h. I was glad to get back home.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Prés (Lignières)	0	920	
Douanne	15	430	
Bienne	24	430	
Selzach	42	450	20
Solothurn	48	430	
Riedholz	52	470	40
Wiedlisbach	58	450	
Niederbipp	62	480	30
Oensingen	66	450	
Oberbuchsitzen	70	460	10
Olten	82	400	
Niedergösgen	90	380	
Aarau	96	370	
Brugg	115	350	
Windisch	116	370	20
Gebenstorf	117	340	
Baden	124	390	50
Mönchhof (Kilchberg)	152	460	70
total	152		240

