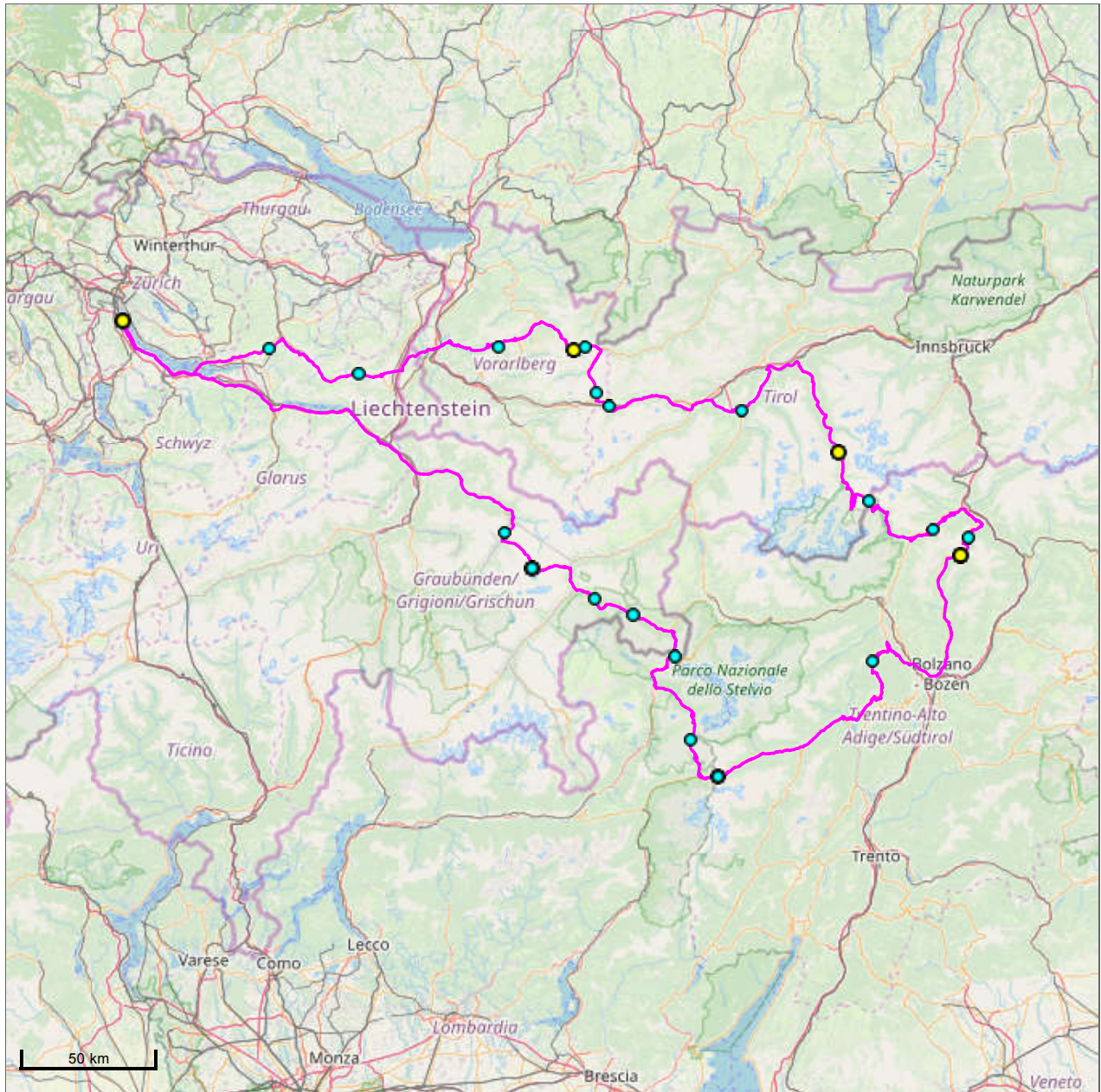
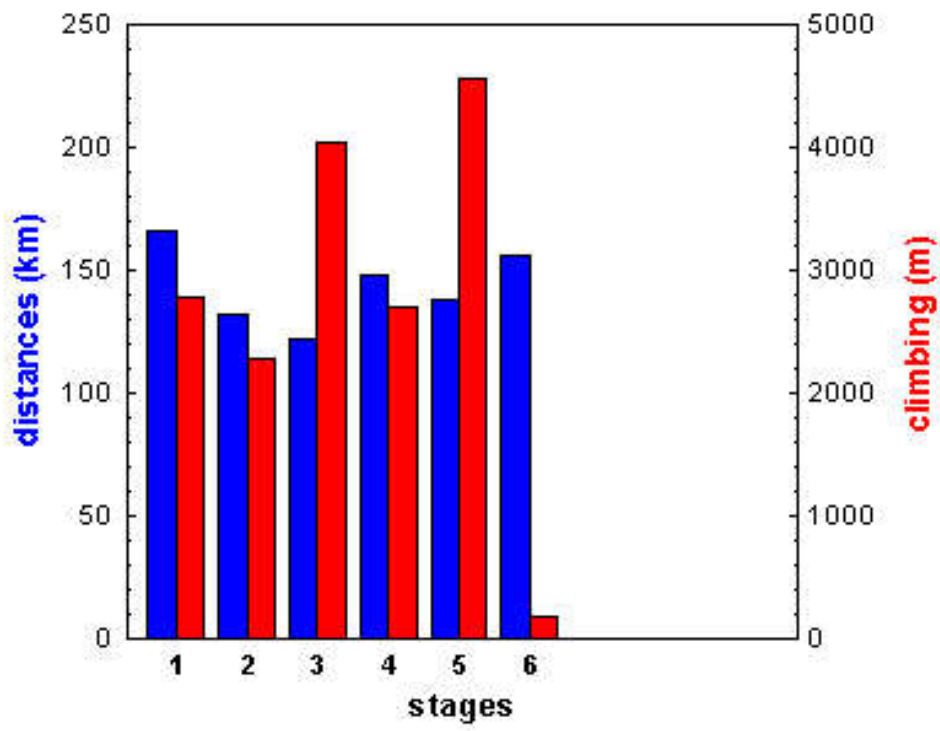


Bicycle tour 1999, 03 - 08 August

Patrick Schleppei

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Kilchberg - Wildhaus - Furkajoch - Schröcken	166	2700
Schröcken - Arlberg - Pillerhöhe - Winkle	132	2320
Winkle - Timmelsjoch - Giovo - Péennes	122	4100
Pens - Bozen - Gampenjoch - Tonale	148	2670
Tonale - Gàvia - Umbrail - Fuorn - Flüela	138	4540
Flüela - Landquart - Kilchberg	156	300
total	862	16630





Gavia, side Bormio



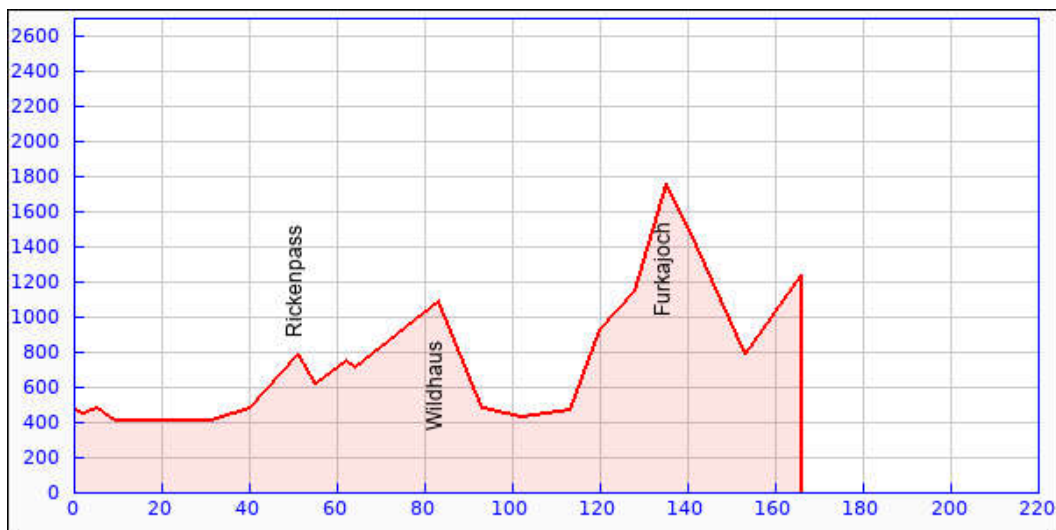
Schröcken and, behind, the Hochkünzelspitze

Stage 1 (3 August 1999): Kilchberg - Wildhaus - Furkajoch - Schröcken

After the beautiful 1997 tour, i wanted to go again to Italian and Austrian Alps. The weather (and the forecasts) were finally good - in this so far so wet 1999. Thus i decided to set everything up at the office on Friday, 2 July in order to take my vacations earlier than planned. On Saturday morning, everything was ready and i hit the road. The first 30 kilometres were along and across the lake of Zurich (over the dam). Arriving at Rapperswil before 8 o'clock, i avoided the big shopping traffic of Saturdays. Then the road began to climb gently to the first (small) pass of this tour: the Ricken. Once on the other side, i rode to the upper part of the Toggenburg. Three words come to my mind to describe this region: green, green and green. The valley climbs gently towards the town of Wildhaus. The descending slope, then, is more respectable. I crossed the Rhine valley and the principality of Liechtenstein and entered Austria. It was about noon when i started to climb towards the Laterntal valley. By then, it was really hot (30°C) and i took care to always drink enough. In the Laterntal, it was evident that, this year, the weather had played crazy: a lot of landslides and much debris along the wild streams witnessed for the storms of May. From Bad-Innerlaterns, the road became very steep. The top point of the day was the Furkajoch, not to be

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Oberer Mönchhof (Kilchberg)	0	470	
Rüschlikon	2	450	
Thalwil	5	480	30
Horgen	9	410	
Rapperswil	31	410	
Eschenbach	40	480	70
Rickenpass	51	790	310
Ulisbach (Wattwil)	55	620	
Blomberg	62	750	130
Krummenau	64	710	
Wildhaus	83	1090	380
Gams	93	480	
Ruggell	102	430	
Rankweil	113	470	40
Laterns	120	930	460
Bad Innerlaterns	128	1150	220
Furkajoch	135	1760	610
Damüls	142	1410	
Au	153	790	
Schröcken	166	1240	450
total	166		2700

confounded with the Furka pass in Switzerland. Not as high... but steep enough. A stop at the pass was necessary. Downhill, headwinds compensated for part of the slope: i barely could ride over 60 km/h, but it felt like 100. After this, i just had strengths left to approach a bit the next pass and stopped before 4 o'clock at Schröcken. Just a few houses, but a least a bed-and-breakfast for me. With a television to watch some of the prologue of the Tour de France. They made only 8 km, nothing to compare with my 166.

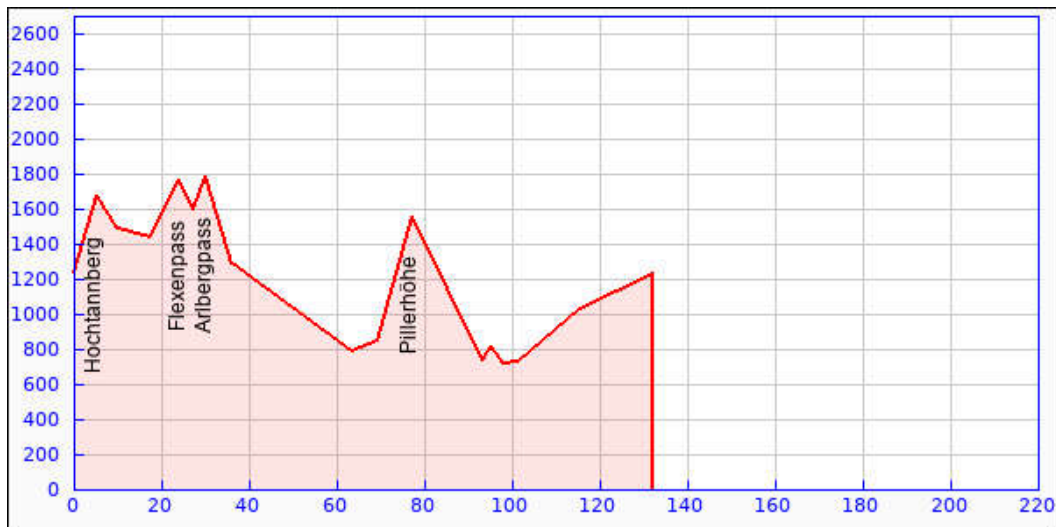


Stage 2 (4 August 1999): Schröcken - Arlberg - Pillerhöhe - Winkle

From Schröcken, the climb to the [Hochtannberg](#) was steep. I threw a last glance down to the elegant church of the village and enjoyed the fresh air of the morning. After the pass, there was a short descent to Warth and then a more or less flat stretch to Lech, well known as a ski resort. My bike began to make a strange noise while pedalling. I discovered that one of the five screws holding the chainrings was a bit loose. Retightening it, however, did not change the noise. I stopped three other times, looking all around, till i finally discovered the problem: the ring holding the gearset on the wheel was unscrewed. I put it back in place, tightening it as best as i could without the special tool for it. After the [Flexenpass](#), the descent was dangerous because the road had stripes made to prepare for putting a new macadam. Not easy to keep a trajectory in the curves, especially in not so well lit tunnels! Then i arrived on the road to the [Arlberg](#) pass, with not so much left to climb. There was a bike race to the pass and a guy had the opportunity to pick up my wheel - lucky him. I made a short stop on the Arlberg to refuel the stomach. Riding down to St. Anton and then to Landeck, i began to feel the heat. The traffic was important but no so terrible, even when the normal road and the highway came together. Still: i did not want to follow this boring road along the valley and made a small detour over a pass called [Pillerhöhe](#). This, however, made me sweat. The climb was exposed to the hot summer sun and it was steep, especially the middle part (around 13% for my 39/26). At least the landscape was nice (view over the Inn valley), i had enough to drink and there were only very few cars. So i ended in the next valley to the east: the Pitztal. Then i rode further down to... the Inn valley again, going now to the east. After a while on the main road, i could take to the right, up to the Ötztal. It was first easy because not steep at all, but then the head wind became stronger and stronger. I began to doubt if i could make it up to Sölden as planned. Finally a flat tire let me decide to stop at the next bed-and-breakfast. It was at Winkle. And it was already 17 o'clock.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Schröcken	0	1240	
Hochtannberg	5	1680	440
Warth	10	1490	
Lech	17	1440	
Flexenpass	24	1770	330
Rauz	27	1600	
Arlbergpass	30	1790	190
St. Anton	36	1290	
Landeck	63	790	
Neuer Zoll (Fliess)	69	850	60
Pillerhöhe	77	1560	710
Brennbichl (Imst)	93	740	
Karres	95	820	80
Mairhof	98	720	
Ötztal	101	730	10
Umhausen	115	1030	300
Winkle	132	1230	200
total	132		2320

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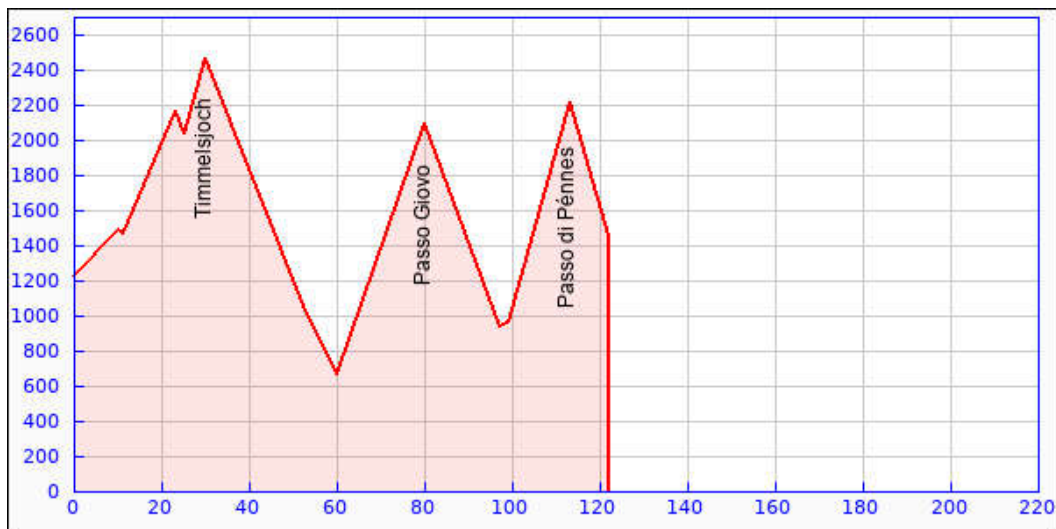


Stage 3 (5 August 1999): Winkle - Timmelsjoch - Giovo - Pénnes

As usual in alpine valleys, the wind was no longer so strong in the morning. It was also cooler and i could start towards the [Timmelsjoch](#) under best conditions. The road really began to climb from Zwieselstein on. I remembered the landscape from the previous autumn when we went, with colleagues, to a scientific meeting in Obergurgl. Everything was right till i arrived at the toll station. Not that i had to pay for riding by bike, no, but the road started to go down. It was not only the bad feeling of loosing hard gained elevation but also the terrible headwind encountered after a large right curve around the mountain. The place was rightly called Windeck. The last part of the climb was in this wild, windy side valley of the Ötztal. At the pass i took a warm tea (it was chilly at almost 2500 m) and chatted with two german cyclists riding to Venice. I saw them again later at St. Leonhard as i was eating a small picnic on the town place. This was after a long descent: steep slopes, a winding road, several dark tunnels and goats on the way. And it was before climbing

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Winkle	0	1230	
Kühbichl (Sölden)	10	1490	260
Zwieselstein	11	1470	
Angerer Alm (Maut)	23	2170	700
Windegg	25	2040	
Timmelsjoch	30	2470	430
Moso	53	1010	
S. Leonardo	60	670	
Passo Giovo	80	2100	1430
Vipiteno	97	940	
Pruno	99	970	30
Passo di Pénnes	113	2220	1250
Pénnes	122	1460	
total	122		4100

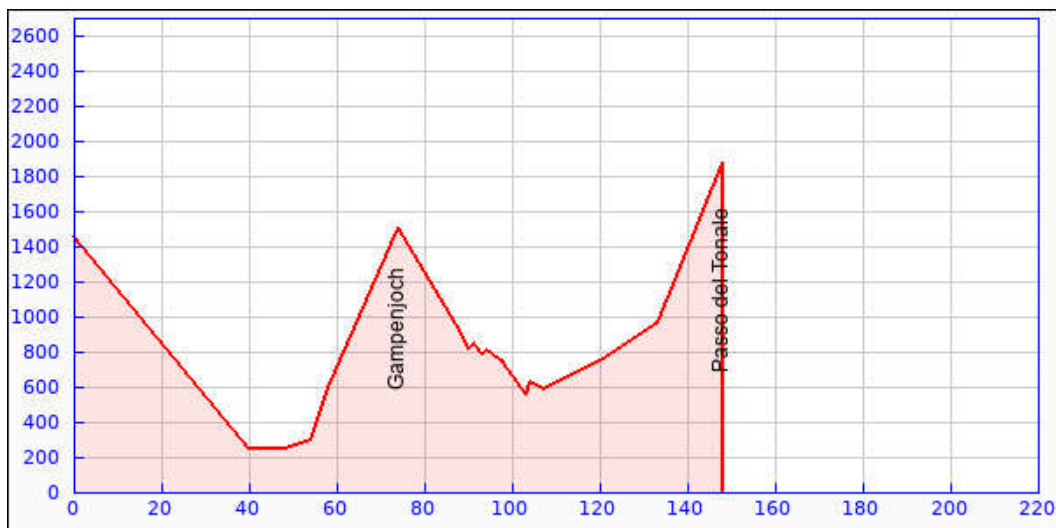
to the next pass of the day. There were not less than 1400 m to climb to the [Jaufenpass / Passo Giovo](#). The first part was largely in the shade of a pine-spruce-larch-and-chestnut forest and then some clouds prevented the sun to roast me. The slope was very regular and i just had to get the right pace in the first hairpin curves. Then i no longer had to think about pedalling and could simply admire the landscape of deep and steep valleys with their forests and pastures. On the other side of the pass, however, the road was not so good. It was better to watch out for cracks and potholes rather than just to speed down. At Sterzing / Vipiteno, i had only a short distance of flat roads and already it began to climb again. First, i did not think that i could go further than Egg / Dosso, a possible stop on the way to the [Penserjoch / Passo di Pénnes](#), but then i still felt good and rode passed the village. It is only a few kilometres later that i came in a thunderstorm. I had to climb the last third under the rain and even under some hail. Arriving at the pass, i was soaked... but happy: i had more than 4000 m of climbing for the day. Then the worst was still to do: riding down in the cold rain to a place i could stay. This was at Pens / Pénnes. Because it was not yet fully holiday season, i did not have to search long for an hotel room.



Stage 4 (6 August 1999): Pens - Bozen - Gampenjoch - Tonale

There was no breakfast before 8 o'clock at the hotel. Then this fourth day of the tour did not begin very well. Doing a quick check of my bike, i saw that it had a broken spoke. Useless to say that it was on the right side of the rear wheel. After a gentle but long descent, i stopped at a bike shop in Bolzano / Bozen. The repair was quickly done and inexpensive. By the way, the gearset was now tightly fixed. So, everything was back to normal, except that it was no longer so early. The ride along the Ádige / Etsch valley, then, was easy thanks to the help of the wind. From Nálles / Nals, however, serious things began again: a few kilometres were very steep. Then the road climbed more regularly to the [Palade / Gampenjoch](#), where i stopped for a soup. Down to Fondo, i did not need to brake, first because the road was good and second because the wind hold my speed within secure limits. I very much feared that the wind could also be strong along the Val di Sole. It was actually not so bad, but i had to stop twice to let small thunderstorms go by. When the road finally started to climb towards the [Tonale](#) pass, i did no longer pay too much attention to the light rain which was more cooling than wetting me. Only for the last kilometres it rained more and more. There are many hotels at the pass (it's a ski resort). They make the landscape quite ugly. Even if i did not like this, i stopped at one of the open hotels. After washing myself under the shower, i washed again my bike clothes. They were wet anyway...

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Pens	0	1460	
Bozen	40	250	
Terlan	48	250	
Nals	54	300	50
Prissiano	58	600	300
Gampenjoch	74	1510	910
Fondo	87	960	
Birreria	90	820	
Vigna	91	850	30
Brez	93	790	
Arsio	94	810	20
Romallo	98	740	
Ponte S. Gallo	103	560	
Scanna	104	630	70
Mostizzolo	107	590	
Dimaro	121	770	180
Fucine	133	970	200
Passo del Tonale	148	1880	910
total	148		2670

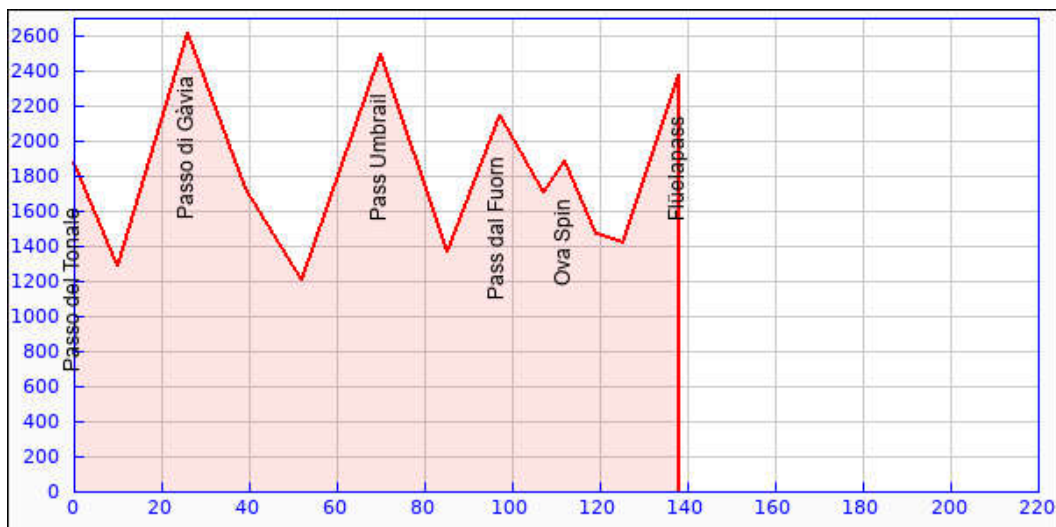


Stage 5 (7 August 1999): Tonale - Gàvia - Umbrail - Fuorn - Flüela

The fifth stage was entirely made of riding up and down and putting clothes on and off. First, i was happy to see that the road was dry again and could enjoy the ride down to Ponte di Legno. Then i took to the north. This meant more or less towards home, but with still some hills on the way. The first was the [Gàvia](#). It was a long but not so hard climb. I discovered that the road was now entirely paved. For sure, this had been done for the Giro d'Italia. Obviously, this made the ride easier. Part of the legend of the Gàvia, however, disappeared with the old gravel road. Even if narrow and irregular in slope, the road was also good down to Sta. Caterina. Till there, there was almost no traffic, but it changed afterwards. At Bòrmio, i went right to the next pass of the day: the road to the Stelvio, but i "only" wanted to go over the [Umbrail](#). Quite a long climb again, and this time with a few rain drops. At the pass, the small cabin was closed. I rode down and got more rain. The bumpy and wet road was not easy, and then there was the gravel. Once on a better road again, i found a

restaurant to eat one of those excellent barley soups, a specialty of the Grisons. The last hairpins down to Sta. Maria were dry again. I did not stop there but continued to the number three of the day: the [Fuorn](#), already known from my first [tour in the Alps \(1991\)](#). The clouds and the wind were still threatening, but it remained dry on the way up. And on the way down. And up a bit again. And further down. I finally reached Susch at four o'clock. An idea was going around in my head since a few hours: what about climbing even a fourth pass? A crazy idea, for sure, especially looking at the dark clouds over the mountains. The threatening weather and the exhaustion, however, could not make it against the big challenge. And for the third time in a row, i arrived at the top and at the end of the stage... under the rain. And it was a new record for me: climbing more than the elevation of the Matterhorn in one day. The speed average was accordingly the lowest ever: barely 19 km/h. But i was happy and, rather than risking a cold and wet descent, i stopped at the [Flüela](#) pass hospice, a little, old, but sympathic hotel.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Passo del Tonale	0	1880	
Ponte di Legno	10	1290	
Passo di Gàvia	26	2620	1330
Sta Caterina	39	1730	
Bòrmio	52	1210	
Pass Umbrail	70	2500	1290
Sta Maria	85	1370	
Pass dal Fuorn	97	2150	780
Punt la Drossa	107	1710	
Ova Spin	112	1890	180
ZerneZ	119	1470	
Susch	125	1420	
Flüelapass	138	2380	960
total	138		4540



Stage 6 (8 August 1999): Flüela - Landquart - Kilchberg

Bad news when waking up this morning: The Flüela was completely in the fog and it was slightly raining. No question, however, of waiting there. I put all the clothes i had on (undershirt, t-shirt, jersey, rain jacket) and went on. At least, riding down, it was less and less cold. As i arrived at Davos, it was still slightly raining. As i rode over the [Wolfgangpass](#) to Klosters, it was still slightly raining. As i arrived at Küblis in the lower Prättigau, it was still slightly raining. I was already thinking of taking the train from Landquart as the rain finally stopped. While i had been riding on the main road so far, it was now forbidden for bikes and there was a good little road in parallel. Around Lanquart and then at Sargans, however, the signs for the bike roads were not clear at all. Fortunately, i remembered that i had to ride through Mels to join then the nice little road along the Seez stream. After Walenstadt, i rode along the Walensee lake where there are even tunnels made especially for the bike route. Without any stop, i continued towards the lake of Zurich and to Kilchberg. I was so happy to get back home and to see again my dear Catrina that i rode this last stage with an average of 31 km/h. But the tour was not yet finished: after so much rain, i'd later have to clean my bike, and this would take a while.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Flüelapass	0	2380	
Davos Dorf	13	1560	
Wolfgangpass	16	1630	70
Brüggen	22	1180	
Klosters Platz	23	1210	30
Saas im Prättigau	32	990	
Küblis	34	820	
Landquart	56	530	
Riet	69	480	
Mels	71	500	20
Walenstadt	83	430	
Mühlehorn	95	420	
Mülital	96	460	40
Salleren (Obstalden)	97	420	
Oberurnen	104	430	10
Rüti (Bilten)	108	420	
Oberbilten	109	450	30
Allmeind (Bilten)	111	420	
Reichenburg	113	440	20
Buttikon	115	420	
Siebnen	120	450	30
Lachen	124	410	
Pfäffikon	130	420	10
Wädenswil	140	410	
Bendlikon (Kilchberg)	155	410	
Oberer Mönchhof (Kilchberg)	156	450	40
total	156		300

