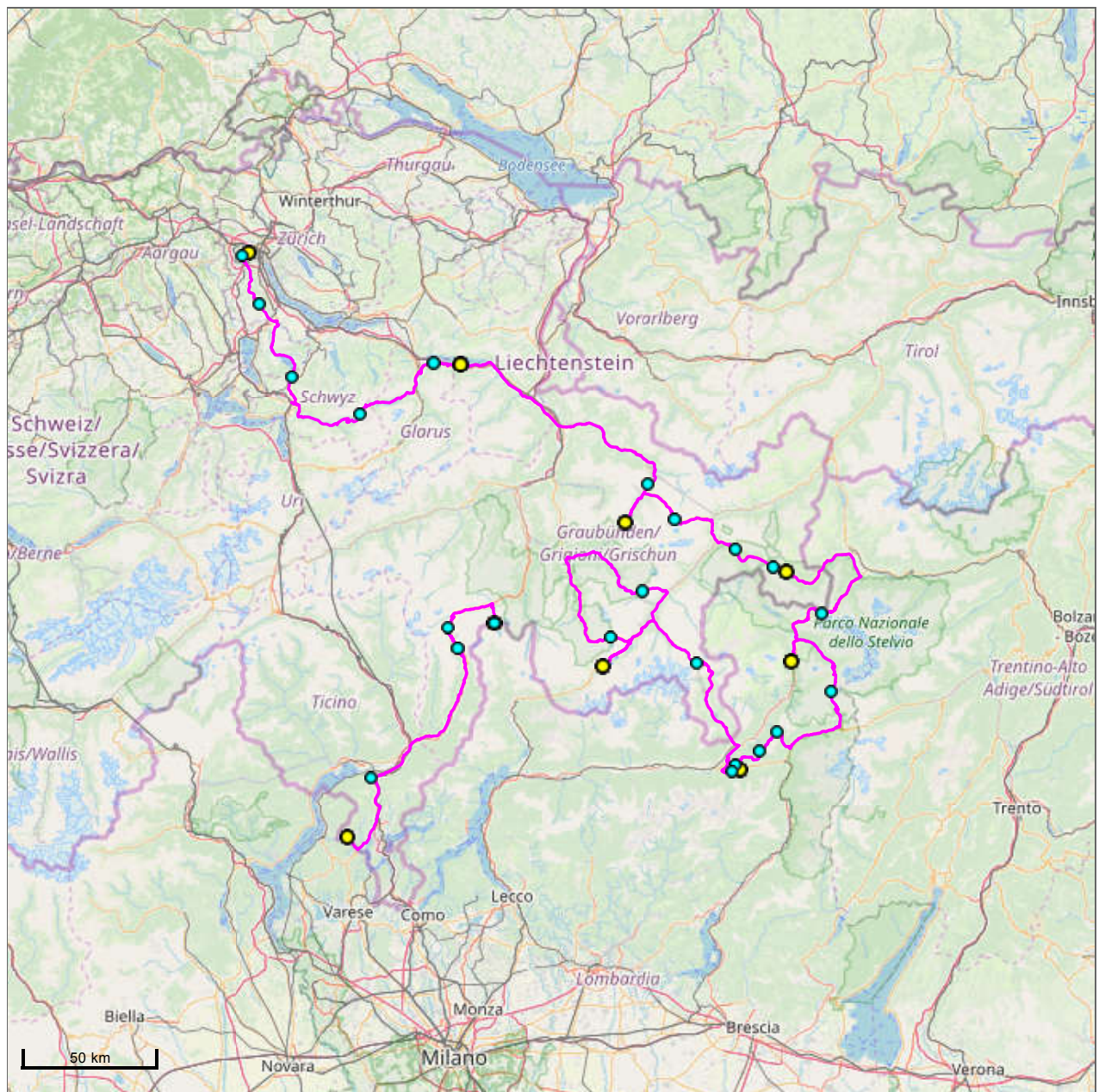
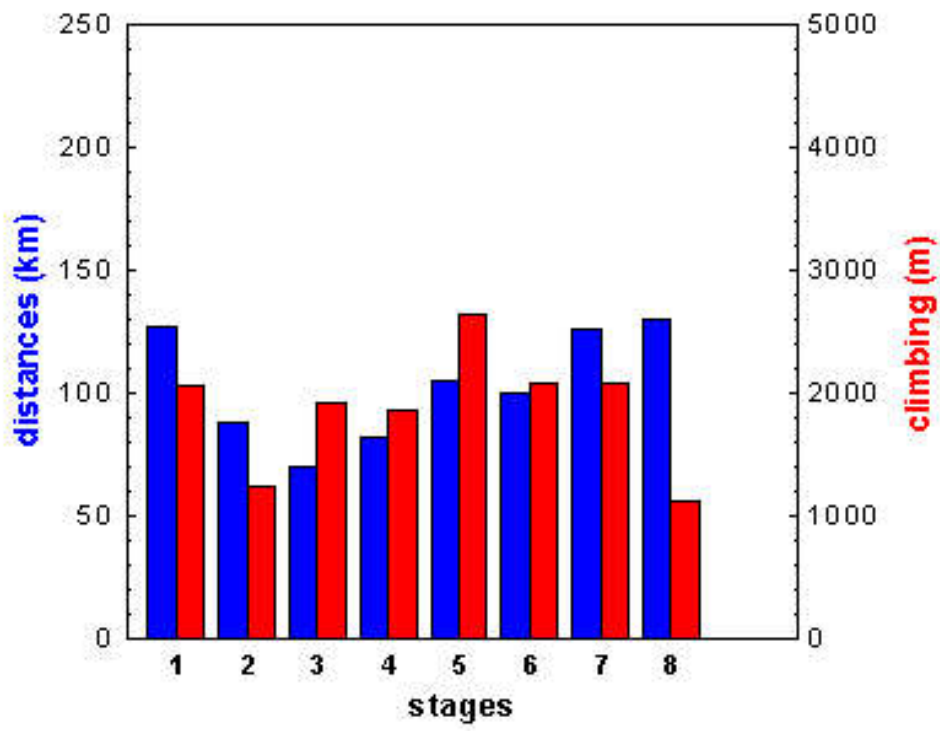


Bicycle tour 2003, 05 - 12 July

Patrick Schleppei

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Zürich - Schwyz - Prigel - Kerenzerberg - Murg	127	2100
Murg - Landquart - Davos - Glaris	88	1250
Glaris - Flüela - Fuorn - Tschierv	70	1840
Tschierv - Prato - Stèlvio - Valdisotto	82	1870
Valdisotto - Gàvia - Foppa - Aprica	105	2690
Aprica - Bernina - Maloja	100	2080
Maloja - Güglia - Tiefencastel - Alvra - Maloja	126	2060
Splügenpass - S. Bernardino - Monte Ceneri - Sessa	130	1120
total	828	15010





The Stelvio climb from Franzenhöhe



Passo del Bernina, La Rösa (side Poschiavo)



Crap Alv (Alp Weissenstein) on the north slope of the Albula



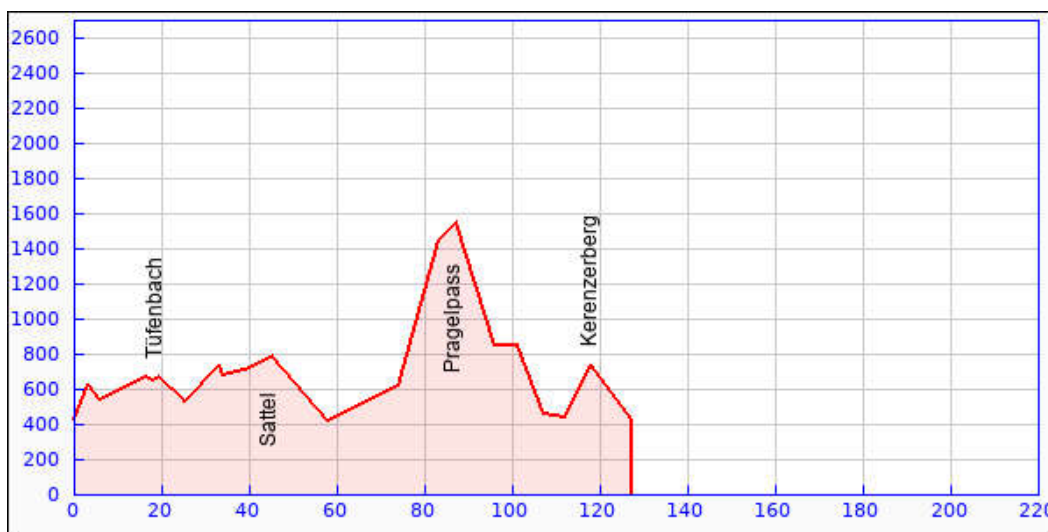
Splügen pass: curves on the north slope

Stage 1 (5 July 2003): Zürich - Schwyz - Pragel - Kerenzberg - Murg

After 12 bicycle tours alone on alpine roads, i needed some change. I had the opportunity to ride with a group of friends of my brother Yves and my sister-in-law Yvonne. So i decided to join them.

The meeting point was in Murg, on the lake of Walenstadt. Starting from Zurich, i imagined that i could ride to Murg with a small detour over the Pragelpass. Yves and Yvonne had the same idea. So i first rode to Schwyz to meet them at the train station and we rode together towards the Muotatal valley. Up to the small town of Muotathal, the roads were almost flat and we rode with a good speed, taking turns in leading. Then, things changed. The small road to the [Pragelpass](#) is steep, at some places very steep. Fortunately, it is forbidden for motor vehicles to drive over the pass on week- ends. Thus, since it was Saturday, we encountered only very few traffic. We climbed at a good pace and reached the pass around noon. It was cool. Even with our wind jackets, we had quite cold riding down. Thus, we decided to stop at the end of the Klöntal lake to eat a warm soup. The rest of the descent was then no problem, even if we had to be careful again because of the traffic. Once we were in the valley, the cloudy weather had at least one advantage: we had no headwind to ride from Netstal to Mollis. From there, we had two options: either to ride to the lake and on the bike path along it, or to go over the [Kerenzberg](#). We chose the pass road, and after the descent to Murg, we had time to take a bath in the lake before the other came with a van and a car. There were Kerstin, Chris, Ursula, Jürgen, Martin and Paul. They brought their bikes, the tents and the bagages (including ours). We set up the tents at the camping and prepared a good barbecue.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Albisrieden (Zürich)	0	430	
Ringlikon	3	630	200
Sellenbüren	6	540	
Habersaat	16	670	130
Türten	18	650	
Tüfenbach	19	670	20
Sihlbrugg	25	530	
Bethlehem	33	740	210
Neuägeri	34	680	
Unterägeri	40	720	40
Sattel	45	790	70
Schwyz	58	420	
Muotathal	74	620	200
Bödmerenwald	83	1450	830
Pragelpass	87	1550	100
Hinter Klöntal	96	850	
Rhodannenberg	101	850	
Netstal	107	460	
Mollis	112	440	
Kerenzberg	118	740	300
Murg	127	430	
total	127		2100

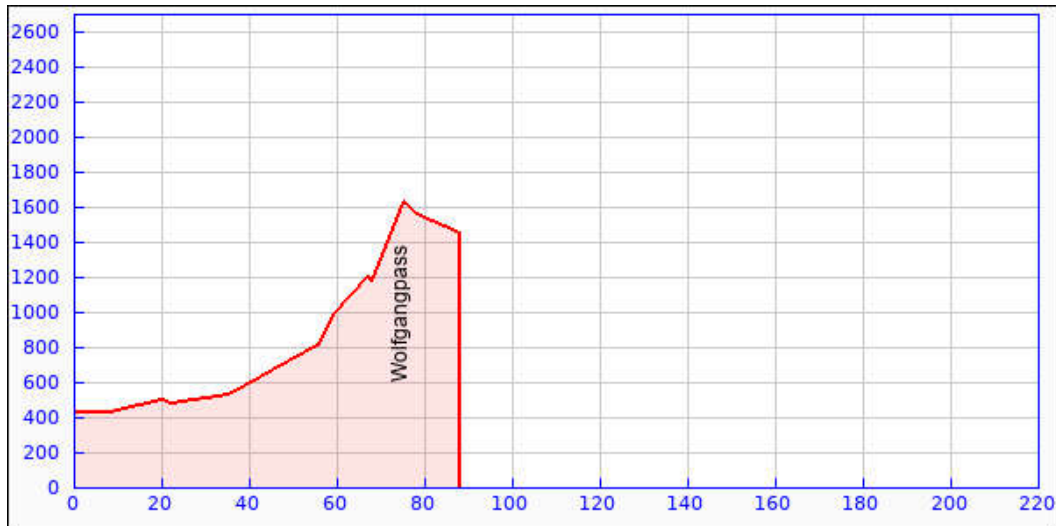


Stage 2 (6 July 2003): Murg - Landquart - Davos - Glaris

After a deep sleep, i went to swim in the lake. Then Chris and Kerstin had brought all the necessary things and we could also prepare our breakfast ourselves. After eating and packing everything, we could hit the road all together... except that somebody had to drive the minibus: Jürgen took the first turn.

The first part of the stage was flat, the weather was nice and we rode without any problem along the lake, then towards Sargans and Landquart, all on bike lanes, bike paths or small roads. After a little pause, we rode into the Prättigau valley. From Küblis on, we had to ride on the main road with a heavy Sunday traffic. At the same time, the road became steeper and it was quite hot, so everybody was sweating. At Klosters, we started to climb to the [Wolfgangpass](#) and each of us took an own pace. Many cars were passing us, and it was quite irritating because (in spite of the broad road), many of them did not leave any safe distance on our side. We all met again at the pass (including Jürgen and the minibus) and rode then down to Davos. Because the camping of Davos was closed (danger of landslides), we continued down to Glaris, where we could set up our tents at a camp for caravans. Yves had then to leave us for three days, so he rode further down and then to Chur, where he could catch a train.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Murg	0	430	
Walenstadt	8	430	
Mels	20	500	70
Riet	22	480	
Landquart	35	530	50
Küblis	56	820	290
Saas i. P.	59	990	170
Klosters Platz	67	1210	220
Brüggen	68	1180	
Wolfgangpass	75	1630	450
Davos Dorf	78	1560	
Glaris	88	1450	
total	88		1250



Stage 3 (7 July 2003): Glaris - Flüela - Fuorn - Tschierv

The night had been clear and chilly. In the morning, our tents were wet and they did not completely dry even after we had taken our breakfast. At 9, our stomachs and the minibus were loaded and we were ready to hit the road. First, we had to ride back to Davos, but this was a good warm-up before starting the climb towards the Flüela pass. Yvonne and Kerstin were driving the minibus, but they left it at the pass and rode back down, just to also have a chance to climb by bike. At the pass, the minibus was still waiting for us with drinks and food and we made a long stop there, not forgetting to take a group picture. A ritual to be repeated at each pass of this tour.

The descent was easy and fast, but we didn't stay long in the Engiadina valley: from Susch, we rode to Zernez, and from there

climbed towards the Swiss national park and to the Ofen pass. The first slopes were quite steep and fully in the sun. Only a few pine trees were giving us some shade. Reaching the 'pre-pass' of Ova Spin, we waited for the slower ones of our group. Then we had five kilometres of descent to the customs and the entrance of the tunnel to Livigno. But we continued towards the Ofen/Fuorn pass, which we reached around 3 in the afternoon. In the descent, we stopped at the first village, Tschierv, where there was a camping, a nice little camping with a beautiful view over the Müstair valley.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Glaris	0	1450	
Davos Dorf	10	1560	110
Flüelapass	23	2380	820
Susch	36	1420	
Zernez	42	1470	50
Ova Spin	49	1890	420
Punt la Drossa	54	1710	
Pass dal Fuorn	64	2150	440
Tschierv	70	1690	
total	70		1840



Stage 4 (8 July 2003): Tschierv - Prato - Stèlvio - Valdisotto

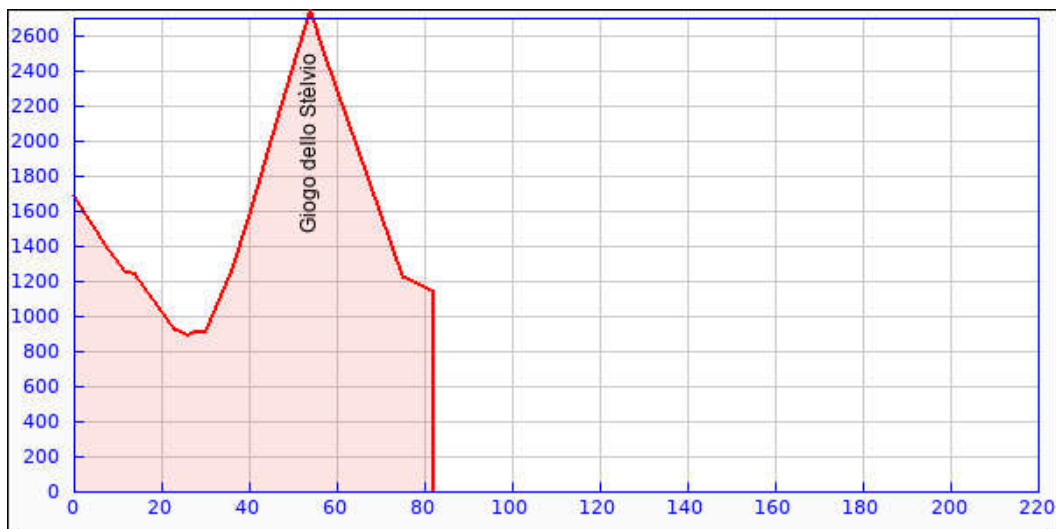
From Tschierv, we could also see the summits of the Ortler massif. We could thus already imagine the stage of the day: it would lead us at the shoulder of the Ortler, over the Stelvio pass. Today, we didn't have to discuss long about who would drive the minibus: Chris was a bit sick and would thus take this turn.

We began with the descent along the Müstair valley: good roads, good speed. We were soon in Italy, then in the Vinschgau valley, where we turned right towards Prad. From there, we had almost 2000 m to climb. The group broke up and everyone took an own pace, riding first along the Solda then Trafoi streams, then on the sun-exposed slopes. After a few kilometres, we reached the first turns, numbered 48 and 47. Further, the count-down really began: 46, 45, 44... One of the most impressive moments of the climb is the curve 24, near the mountain restaurant of Franzelhöhe. From there, all the remaining hairpin-curves appear, piled above each other. And the pass, looking almost inaccessible on top of them. The [Stelvio](#) is something like a legend among cyclists, and much of

it is because of this image of an almost endless steep winding road. (Because of the cloudy weather, i had missed this sight on my previous climb, in 1994.)

I was first to reach the pass and thus could try to distinguish the others as they appeared in the last curves. There were a few other cyclists, there were cars and there were many motorcycles. And, after a while, the lasts of our group appeared. We found Chris and the minibus (arrived through the [Umbrail](#) pass), with the necessary food and drinks. I warned the other about the unlit tunnels in the descent (also about their potholes) and, when everybody was ready, we rode down to Bórmio. Then, we had to go a few kilometres further in the Valtellina valley, to the camping of Valdisotto. It was hot and dry and we fought against headwinds. Coming from the Stelvio, the temperature difference knocked us out. Arriving at the camping, we could first only get drinks and lie in the shade. Only when the sun was lower did we find strength again to set up the tents, then to cook our huge spaghetti supper.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Tschierv	0	1690	
Sta Maria	8	1380	
Müstair	12	1250	
Tubre	14	1240	
Glurns / Glorenza	23	920	
Schacht	26	890	
Montechiaro	27	910	20
Prato	30	910	
Gomagoi	36	1260	350
Trafoi	40	1570	310
Franzenhöhe	47	2190	620
Giogo dello Stèlvio	54	2760	570
Umbrail	57	2500	
Bórmio	75	1220	
Valdisotto	82	1140	
total	82		1870

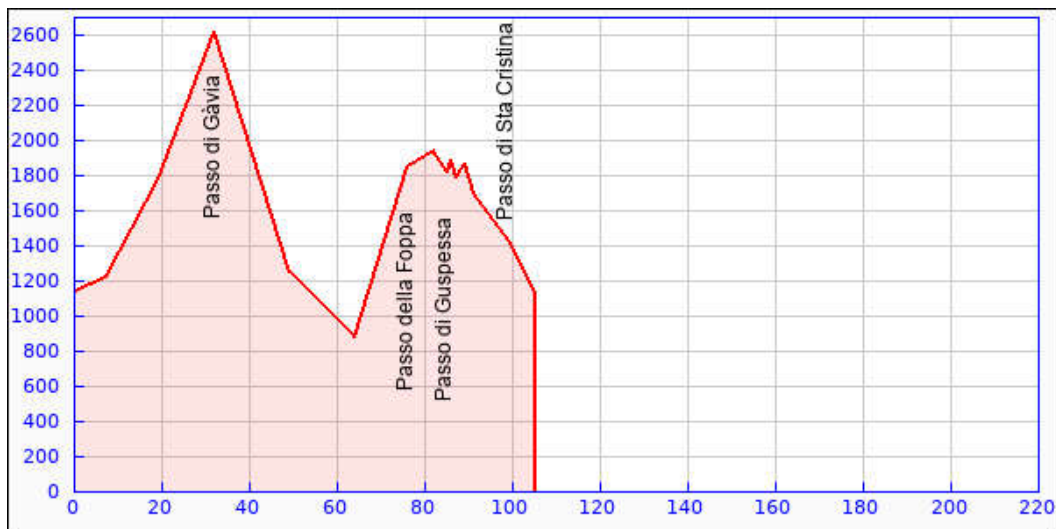


Stage 5 (9 July 2003): Valdisotto - Gàvia - Foppa - Aprica

Because Chris was not yet fit, he took again the minibus. The rest of us rode first back to Bórmio and then to Santa Caterina. Short after this town, we saw a cyclist sitting by the road side. I stopped to ask him if i could help. He had a puncture but had already called for help: somebody was coming by car to help. I asked him also if he knew the way between Mortirolo and Trivigno and he told me that the road was good. After that, i rode on and caught up each of our group, one after the other. Everyone was enjoying the climb: beautiful landscape, small but good road with very few cars, perfect weather (slightly covered). The slope was quite irregular, changing between easy and very steep. The last one that i caught up was Yvonne, and we reached the **Gavia** pass together. The other followed, all happy about this beautiful climb. The descent that followed was also remarkable: very narrow road, running along very steep mountain slopes, sharp curves, a tunnel without light, a few potholes. After a short stop in Ponte di Legno, we rode all together because there was headwind. The goal of the day

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Valdisotto	0	1140	
Bórmio	7	1220	80
Sta Caterina	19	1780	560
Passo di Gàvia	32	2620	840
Ponte di Legno	49	1250	
Incùdine	64	880	
Passo della Foppa	76	1850	970
Baite Dorena	82	1940	90
Passo di Guspessa	85	1820	
Baite Sauccho	86	1890	70
Baite del Lago	87	1790	
Alpe Zigali	89	1870	80
Trivigno	91	1700	
Passo di Sta Cristina	99	1430	
S. Pietro	105	1140	
total	105		2690

was Aprica, which could be reached by riding down do Édolo and then up. Yvonne and Jürgen had decided to come with me for an extra ride, and finally Kerstin also came with us: short after Incudine, we left the others on the road to Édolo and took right, up to the Mortirolo and Foppa passes. We had again 1000 m to climb and it was warm, but we had time, there was shade in the forests, there were few cars and the wild strawberries along the roadside tasted good. Just before reaching the **Foppa**, we had a drink at the terrace of a small restaurant. Then, at the pass, we turned towards Trivigno. This small but good road led more or less along the crest. The view over the Valtellina was especially beautiful and we stopped several times to take pictures. The road was almost flat and we also rode not over but across a small pass, **Guspessa**. The descent to Trivigno and then to Aprica had unfortunately many places with gravel, especially dangerous in the forest where blinding sunshine and shade alternated. As we finally reached Aprica and its camping, the others had already set up their tents and taken a shower. Now it was our turn!



Stage 6 (10 July 2003): Aprica - Bernina - Maloja

We could not start so early from [Aprica](#) because the bakery did not open before 7:30. After breakfast, Ursula took the minibus. Chris was feeling better and lead the pack in the descent to Stazzona. Once in the valley, we chose small roads along the orchards. Then, from Tirano, we started to climb to the Poschiavo valley. The first part was for me the hardest because it was already hot. From the lake of Poschiavo to the equally-named town, we could ride faster and get some fresh air. After a short pause to fill the bottles, we continued on the long way to the [Bernina](#) pass. The temperature became pleasant and the landscape was changing all the time: after the sub-mediterranean vegetation of the Valtellina, up to the alpine meadows almost 2000 m higher. As we were finally all at the pass, Yves arrived from the other side to join us again.

In the descent, the weak slope and the headwind often made it necessary to pedal. This, however, was by far not as bad as the incredible car traffic which we found around St. Moritz. Why do so many people escape the cities during holidays, just to make the mountains to a city? No answer could be found; that's just the way it is, apparently. From St. Moritz to Maloja, the road was almost flat and, this way, the [Maloja](#) pass is the easiest that one can imagine. The camping was close to the lake of Sils. Lying at an elevation of 1800 m, this lake was quite cold and only the courageous went swimming. The others preferred the warm showers of the camping.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
S. Pietro	0	1140	
Aprica	4	1180	40
Stazzona	17	400	
Tirano	24	440	40
Poschiavo	41	1020	580
Pass dal Bernina	60	2320	1300
Pontresina	76	1800	
Schlarigna	81	1720	
Silvaplana	88	1820	100
Segl Baselgia	97	1800	
Maloja	100	1820	20
total	100		2080



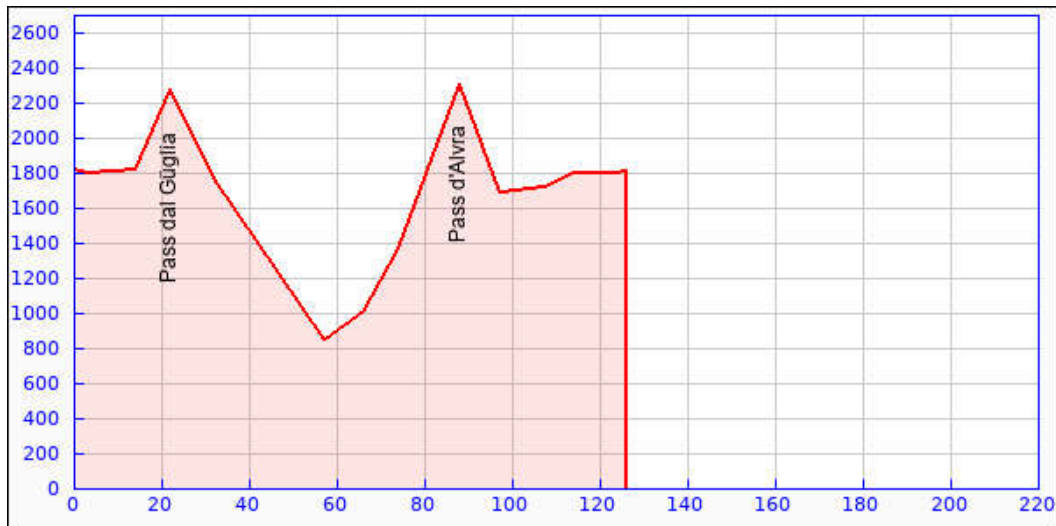
Stage 7 (11 July 2003): Maloja - Güglia - Tiefencastel - Alvra - Maloja

Because some of us were a bit tired, they decided to go with the minibus up to the first pass or back after the second one. It was like a stage 'à la carte'.

I rode to the [Julier](#) together with Yvonne, Yves and Jürgen. At the pass we found Paul, who had started from Silvaplana. For the long descent to Tiefencastel, we had headwind, as expected by this warm weather. We stayed therefore together to ride easier against the wind. And to share a good picnic from the bakery of Savognin. We decided to end our collaboration at Filisur, on the first steep slopes to the [Albula](#) pass. Yves was leading up to Bergün and i did not care to keep up with him. Then, however, i passed him as he was filling his bottles at a fountain and he caught up again a bit later. We continued together up to Preda, to the Alp Weissenstein and to the pass. On the way, we passed Kerstin (busy taking pictures), Ursula and Chris. All, like us, were enjoying the beautiful landscape. The Albula pass is one of my preferred climbs. Martin had driven from the other side with the minibus and we found him as we reached the pass. After a long stop there, we let us slide down to La Punt. There, Kerstin, Chris and Paul started a new climb... into the minibus. The rest of us rode again to the upper end of the Engiadina valley, to [Maloja](#). We were taking relays and went quite efficiently along these last 30 kilometres.

It was my turn to be the chef to prepare the supper (but everybody helped). We had a plate typical of the region: pizzocheri. It is a sort of pasta made of buckwheat, cooked with potatoes and chard, and served with a cream and butter sauce. We prepared a large amount of it, but at the end everything was gone. Including the red wine.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Maloja	0	1820	
Segl Baselgia	3	1800	
Silvaplana	14	1820	20
Pass dal Güglia	22	2280	460
Bivio	32	1770	
Tiefencastel	57	850	
Filisur	66	1010	160
Bravuogn	74	1370	360
Pass d'Alvra	88	2310	940
La Punt	97	1690	
Schlarigna	107	1720	30
Silvaplana	114	1800	80
Segl Baselgia	123	1800	
Maloja	126	1810	10
total	126		2060



Stage 8 (12 July 2003): Splügenpass - S. Bernardino - Monte Ceneri - Sessa

Once it had to be my turn to drive the minibus. And i had two reasons to do it for this last stage. First because the Splügen was at the programme and it was only one year that i climbed this pass (also from the south). Second because i wanted to leave the group at Splügen and ride to the Ticino, and this would be a long enough ride. Even if i was missing the descent from the [Maloja](#) into the Bregaglia valley, too bad!

I met the cyclists again at Chiavenna to buy food and drinks, then we finally started the long climb to the [Splügen](#) pass. It was already hot and i was also sweating: driving the minibus on this narrow road with many hairpin curves was really not so easy. I stopped again at Campodolcino, about half-way to the pass and waited. Everybody arrived safely there, but Ursula did not feel too strong and preferred to load her bicycle and to come with the minibus. I already said good-bye to the somewhat slower cyclists because i did not want to wait longer than 3 o'clock at the pass. At that time, indeed, i took my bicycle out of the bus: for me the stage was just beginning.

The first part, the descent to the village of Splügen, was a pleasure. The second part, along the valley to Hinterrhein, was also enjoyable. The third part, climbing to the [San Bernardino](#) pass, was a delight (all the cars taking the tunnel). The fourth part, the long descent of the Mesolcina, was a long, big fun. Just interrupted by the cobblestones of Mesocco and Lostallo. As it was warmer and warmer, my bottles were soon empty. I kept watching for a fountain for kilometres, but i saw only a few ones and they were all dry, turned off because of the summer drought. I could finally drink and refill the bottles in Bellinzona.

Coming out of Bellinzona, i was riding on a main road, but then it was forbidden for bicycles. There was a bicycle lane to the right, then this lane disappeared, then the road turned right again, then... i was coming back to Bellinzona. I went towards the center of the plain (Piano di Magadino) and found a sign for a bicycle road... but without indication where it was leading. Fortunately, i had kept some sense of orientation and chose the right direction. Arriving at Cadenazzo after these detours, i started to climb to the last pass of this tour, which was actually the only new one for me: the [Monte Ceneri](#). Not a big pass but, because of the heat, it was not so easy to climb. On the other side, i had a gentle but rather long descent. Again, however, road signs for bicycles were misleading (once to a road which was then forbidden to any traffic, another time to an unpaved way). In that region, bicycle routes are just one big nonsense! Don't trust them at all. In spite of these problems, i kept riding south, towards Ponte Tresa. Just before the customs and the bridge over the Tresa river, i turned right. After a few kilometres in that direction, i could turn right again and ride up to Sessa. My girlfriend Angelika had just arrived there for two weeks of vacations. I had first to take a shower, then to drink and eat and tell about this tour: good weather all the time, no accident, no technical problem.

Ten days later, i would ride back home over the Gotthard pass, a long stage (240 km) but i'm not going to write about it here.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Splügenpass	0	2110	
Splügen	9	1460	
Hinterrhein	21	1620	160
Passo del S. Bernardino	29	2070	450
S. Bernardino	37	1610	
Forcola	39	1660	50
Mesocco	50	790	
Lostallo	62	420	
Bellinzona	81	240	
Cadenazzo	93	210	
Monte Ceneri	100	550	340
Manno	114	350	
Ponte Tresa	124	270	
Molinazzo	128	260	
Sessa	130	380	120
total	130		1120

