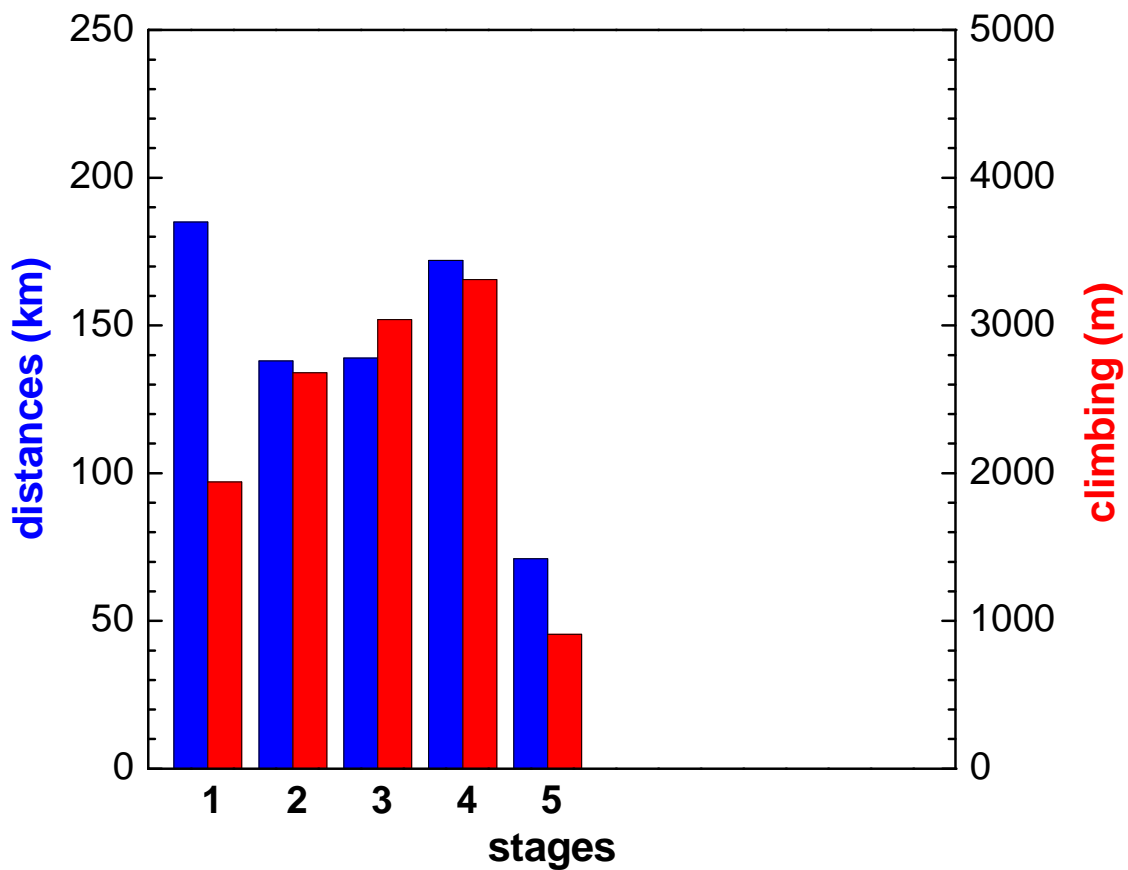


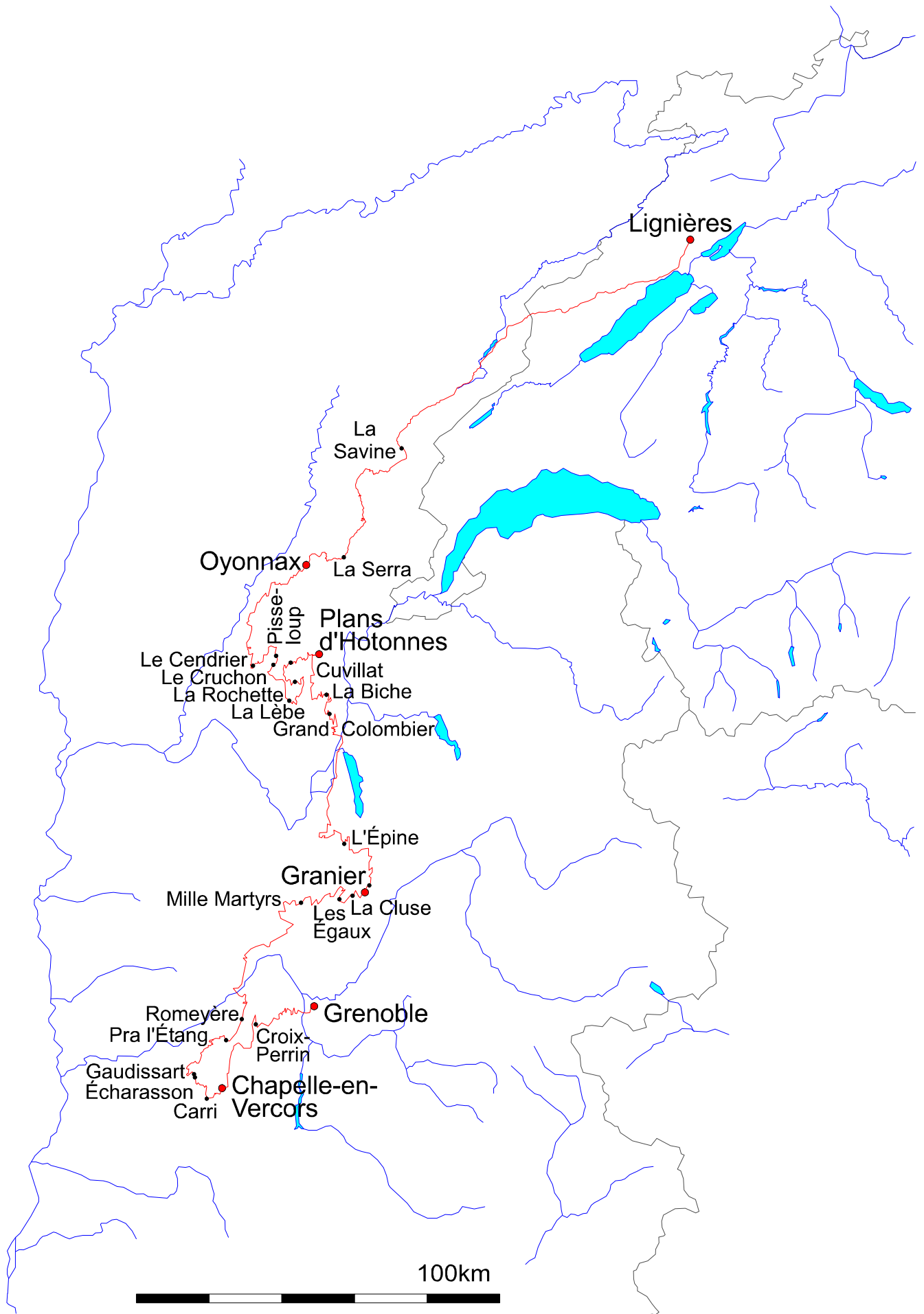
# Bicycle tour 2004

5 stages, 28 June - 2 July

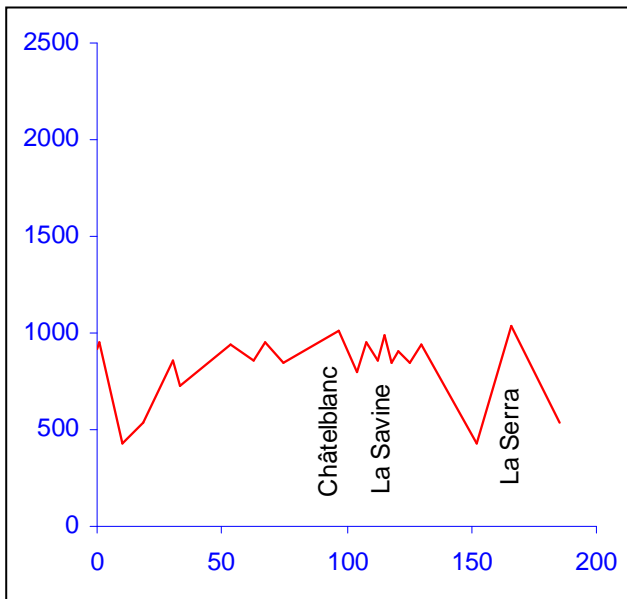
Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Lignières - Oyonnax	185	1940
Oyonnax - Plans d'Hotonnes	138	2680
Plans d'Hotonnes - Granier	139	3040
Granier - Chapelle-en-Vercors	172	3310
Chapelle-en-Vercors - Grenoble	71	910
<b>Total</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>11 880</b>





## Stage 1 (28 June 2004): Lignières - Oyonnax

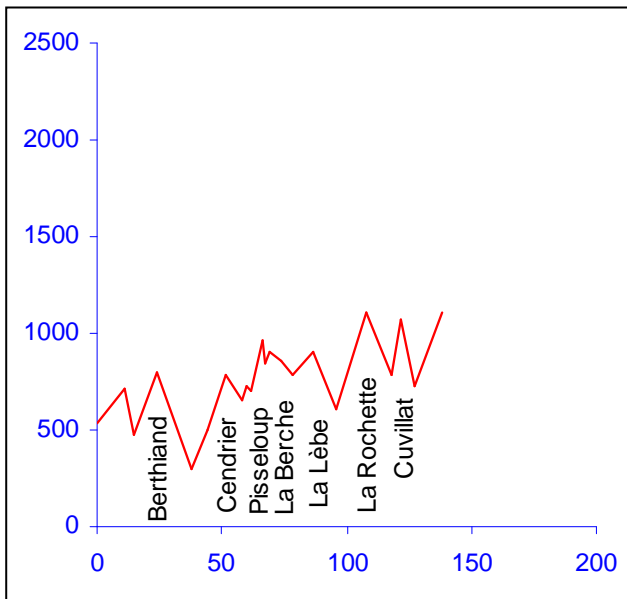


Just as wished, the weather forecasts were good for at least 3 days counting from this Monday morning. I was in Lignières since the eve and had breakfast with my parents and my brother Alain before starting for this year's bicycle tour. First, i went down to Neuchâtel, then towards the Val de Travers. I rode all the way up to Les Verrières, which is on the border to France. The sky was cloudy, the temperature was perfect and there was not too much traffic: everything was all right. Only as i came down on the main road south of Pontarlier did i encounter many cars and trucks, but i did not had to go far on this way and turned right towards the lake of St-Point. Especially along the lake, but then also along the upper course of the Doubs river, i was crossing a region with some tourism. I passed Mouthe, the source of the Doubs, around midday

and continued towards the south-west. Then i turned left to the Savine pass, which was of no particular interest except that it brought me to Morbier, a town famous for its large pendulum clocks, which French name is... morbier. I stayed on the right side of the Bienne valley and climbed to Château-des-Prés before riding again south and down to St-Claude. This city is entirely built on the slopes of several valleys coming together there. I had a drink and a sandwich on a terrace and met there a cyclist from Basel on a two-day tour. Then, however, it was not easy to leave St-Claude and its strange traffic regulation; at least i did not have to ride too much up and down before finding the exit towards the Serra pass. This climb was quite hard, not so much because of the slope itself but because it was now hot. From the pass, i had to ride all the way down to the valley before i found an hotel.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Prés s/ Lignières	0	920	
Les Gravereules	1	950	30
St-Blaise	10	430	
Peseux	18	540	110
Brot-Dessous	30	860	320
Noiraigue	33	730	
Champs-Berthoud	53	940	210
Le Frambourg	63	860	
Chaon	67	950	90
Granges-Ste-Marie	75	850	
Châtelblanc	97	1010	160
Faucine-le-Bas	104	800	
Le Voisinal	108	950	150
Les Martins	112	860	
La Savine	115	990	130
Morbier	118	850	
Tancua	121	900	50
Les Mouillés	125	850	
Château-des-Prés	130	940	90
St-Claude	152	430	
La Serra	166	1030	600
Oyonnax	185	530	
<b>total</b>	<b>185</b>		<b>1940</b>

## Stage 2 (29 June 2004): Oyonnax - Plans d'Hotonnes

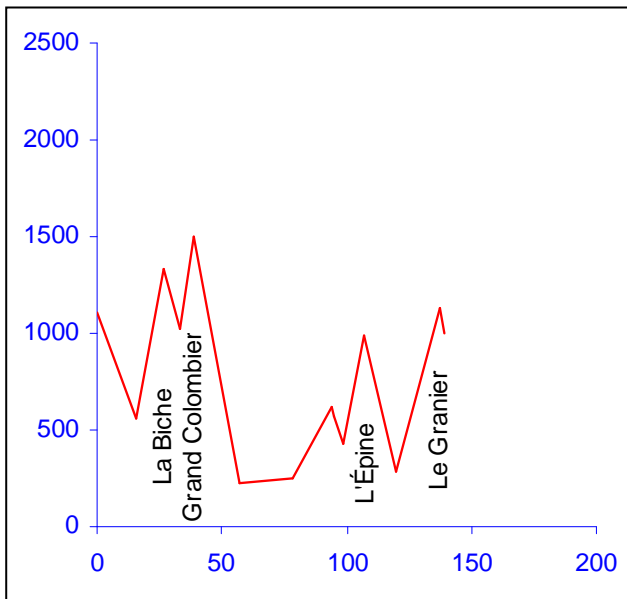


The weather was fine as i left Oyonnax for this second stage. Riding first south-west, i had to cross two small mountain ridges before a steep descent towards Cerdon, in a valley with some vineyards. Then, apparently almost erratically, i went over several passes and across or along valleys of the region, the Bugey. The passes were not high and most of them were small department roads in the forests. The shade of the trees was more and more appreciated as the temperature was climbing and climbing. The main activity in the valleys was agriculture. Many houses appeared abandoned, showing that the local economy is not flourishing. For the cyclists, it is disappointing to see that all fountains are either dry or their water marked as non-drinkable. And there are no shops or bakeries except in the larger towns. After riding twice over the same ridge

(Rochette and Cuvillat passes), i hoped to find an hotel in L'Abergement. There had been one on each side of the river, but both were now closed. I asked people and they told me to climb to a small resort higher on the valley side. Because i was now tired and thirsty, i did not really appreciate this supplement. And when i arrived at the Plans d'Hotonnes, i had to ask at four different places till i found one where i could sleep. At least it was a very nice little "gîte", at a beautiful and calm location. The dinner, as mostly in France, was delicious and plentiful (even for a cyclist).

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Oyonnax	0	530	
Ijean	11	710	180
Izernore	15	480	
Berthiand	24	800	320
Cerdon	38	300	
Montratier	44	500	200
Le Cendrier	52	790	290
Brouillat	58	650	
Lantenay	60	730	80
Outriaz	62	700	
Pisseloup	66	970	270
Corcelles	67	850	
Le Cruchon	69	900	50
La Berche	74	860	
Hauteville	78	780	
La Lèbe	87	910	130
Sutrieu	96	610	
La Rochette	108	1110	500
Champdor	118	790	
Cuvillat	122	1070	280
L'Abergement	127	730	
Les Plans d'Hotonnes	138	1110	380
<b>total</b>	<b>138</b>		<b>2680</b>

## Stage 3 (30 June 2004): Plans d'Hotonnes - Granier

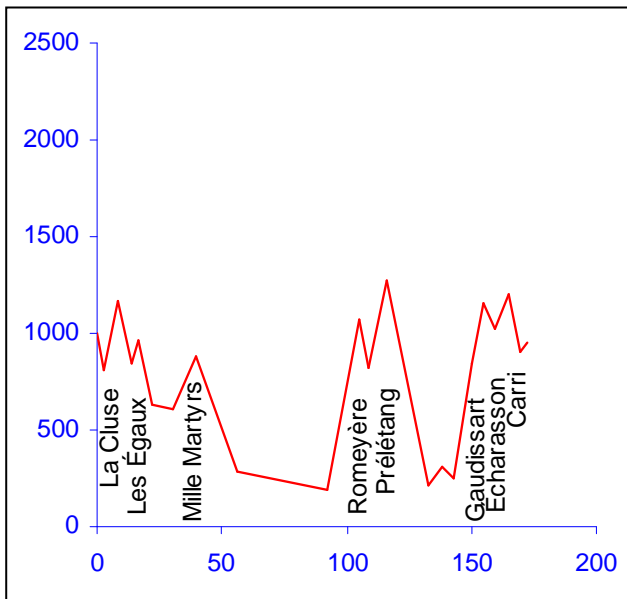


After a nice descent in the Val Romey valley, i turned left and climbed towards the Col de la Biche (pass of the hind). It was quite a long but pleasant climb, all in the shade in the morning and with almost no traffic. Short after the pass, i left the road to take a foot path and then a gravel road. This shortcut allowed me to climb to the Grand Colombier without having to go all the way down to the valley; but these were really 3 km of cyclocross! The Grand Colombier is the last summit of the Jura and has the Rhône river at its south foot. There are four different ways to climb to the pass, which very close to the summit. All these roads have irregular slopes, with some very steep parts. I was happy that it was not yet too warm and the pass rewarded me with a beautiful panoramic view... and with a nice, long descent to Culoz. The further down i came, the further up went the

temperature. It was noon as i arrived at Culoz, at the bottom of the lower cliffs of the Grand Colombier. I bought something to eat and to drink, crossed the Rhône and rode straight south. After some 20 km, the road left the river and started to climb gently to Novalaise. Before reaching this town, however, i made a small detour over the Crusille pass. I had to beg for some water because the water of the fountains was always again declared non-drinkable. After a short descent, i reached the foot of the Épine pass, which would bring me to Chambéry without real difficulties. In Chambéry, it was now hot. In the first slopes of the Granier, i had again to stop and beg for some water. There were several other cyclists climbing to the Granier, all obviously on a short ride and less tired than me. After the pass, i stopped at the first "gîte" which i found on the way. It was at the very small resort of Granier. I was happy to find again a place to sleep in the mountains, with fresh air and calm surroundings.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Plans d'Hotonnes	0	1110	
Passin	16	560	
La Biche	27	1330	770
Forêt d'Arvière	33	1020	
Grand Colombier	39	1500	480
Culoz	57	230	
Yenne	78	250	20
Le Vivier	94	620	370
La Crusille	95	570	
Novalaise	99	430	
L'Épine	107	990	560
Chambéry	120	290	
Le Granier	137	1130	840
Granier station	139	1000	
<b>total</b>	<b>130</b>		<b>3040</b>

## Stage 4 (1 July 2004): Granier - Chapelle-en-Vercors



The fourth stage started with a descent along the Entremont valley, but soon i turned right and climbed to two small passes (Cluse and Égaux) with a little, very picturesque village between them, Corbel. Again, there was very few traffic and i could just enjoy the ride. Later, on the main road to Les Échelles, there were more cars, but i was in a descent and came fast down. The name of the next pass did not apply well: "Mille Martyrs", but i did not have to suffer like 1000 martyrs since it was an easy climb. And then i had a long descent to St-Nicolas-de-Macherin, which finally brought me to the Isère valley. For some parts, i had to take the national road, but for other parts i could ride on small roads. Like after Tullins across walnut orchards.

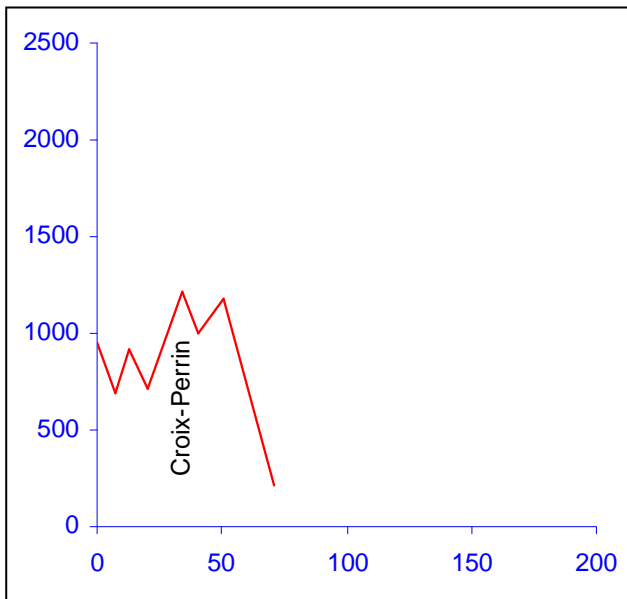
To end this quite flat part, i entered the Vercors massif. First, i wondered where the road to the

Romeyère pass would run since there was just one big rock barrier. After about half of the climb in the forests, i understood: the road was carved in the rock itself, before reaching a high valley. There was a commemorative stone about some fightings between the french résistance and the german troupes during the second world war. The whole Vercors region has a lot of such tokens. The last part of the climb was gentle, between forests and meadows. In the descent, i turned right just before the village of Rencurel, towards the small pass of Prélétang. This was not just to add one more pass to my collection but also to avoid the road in the Bourne canyon, which was closed because of falling rocks. The road over Prélétang, however, was in bad condition. After Presles, this was better again and the road came down from steep cliffs over Pont-en-Royans. I stopped there to eat a sandwich, where houses are built right on the rocks over the Bourne river. I

went the to St-Jean and started the last climb of the day, to the Gaudissart and Écharasson passes. It was already near 6 o'clock as i arrived at the top, but i still had to ride over a small, gentle pass (Carri) to reach La Chapelle-en-Vercors. In this nice little town, i had no problem to find an hotel.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Granier station	0	1000	
Entremont-le-Vieux	3	810	
La Cluse	8	1170	360
Corbel	14	840	
Les Égaux	17	960	120
Couz	22	630	
Les Échelles	30	610	
Mille Martyrs	40	880	270
Voiron	56	290	
St-Gervais	92	190	
Romeyère	105	1070	880
Le Violon	109	820	
Prélétang	116	1270	450
Pont-en-Royans	133	210	
St-Laurent	138	310	100
St-Jean	143	250	
Gaudissart	150	840	590
L'Écharasson	155	1150	310
Les Autarets	159	1020	
Carri	165	1200	180
La Cime-du-Mas	170	900	
Chapelle-en-Vercors	172	950	50
<b>total</b>	<b>172</b>		<b>3310</b>

## Stage 5 (2 July 2004): Chapelle-en-Vercors - Grenoble



I don't know where and when i got it, but after 4 stages i had a bad cold! It was clear: i had to give up the final goal of this tour, which would have been the Mont Ventoux. Instead of going further south, i had to ride to a place where i could take a train back to Switzerland. I chose to go to Grenoble. I was breathing with difficulty, but my legs were still doing well. First, i went down to the Vernaison stream, then up to St-Julien and down to the Bourne canyon. (In front of me, i could see Rencurel and the Romeyère pass, where i had been less than 24 hours earlier.) In spite of my poor health, a made a small detour over the pass of Croix-Perrin to reach Lens. There, i just crossed the road along the valley and continued to St-Nizier. Finally, there was just a long, long descent to Grenoble.

I arrived at the main station of Grenoble around noon. Unfortunately, there were not many trains towards Switzerland. The "best" connection to Geneva would not leave before half past three and i would have to change twice. For the second change, in Culoz, there would even be more than one hour to wait. Well, i told to myself: "don't cry, it could be worse". I didn't cry... and it became worse: the train from Culoz was 30 minutes late, even 40 minutes as we finally reached Geneva. It was 8 o'clock. Eight hours for about 150 km: i would have been faster by bike! That's the french train system: either you are on a track to or from Paris, or it's almost a nightmare. From Geneva to Neuchâtel, no problem, there is a train every hour (but the price to take a bicycle onboard is crazy; it is even necessary to take a reservation for it).

I was really happy as i was finally back in Lignièrès, where i could recover... and start dreaming of another bike tour... to the Mont Ventoux???

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Chapelle-en-Vercors	0	950	
Tourtret	7	690	
St-Julien	13	920	230
Gorges de la Bourne	20	720	
La Croix-Perrin	34	1220	500
Lans	41	1000	
St-Nizier	51	1180	180
Grenoble	71	220	
<b>total</b>	<b>71</b>		<b>910</b>