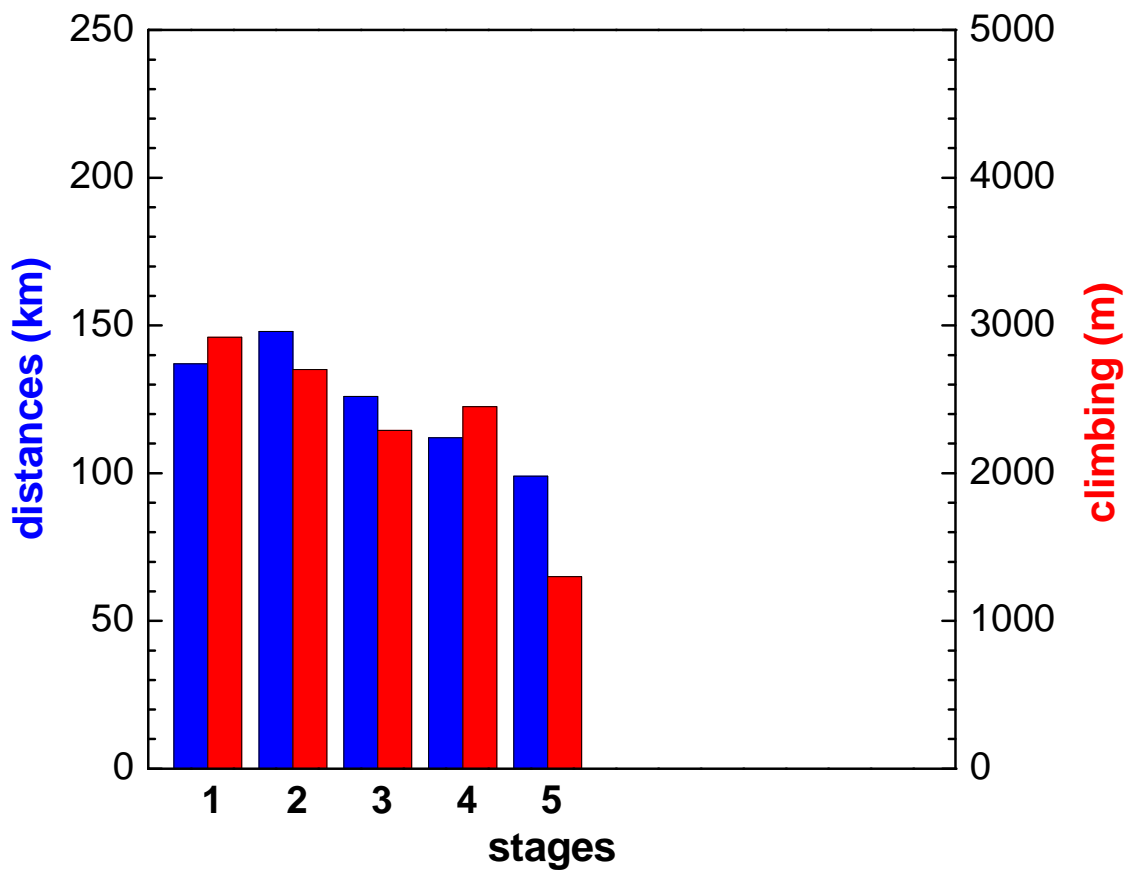


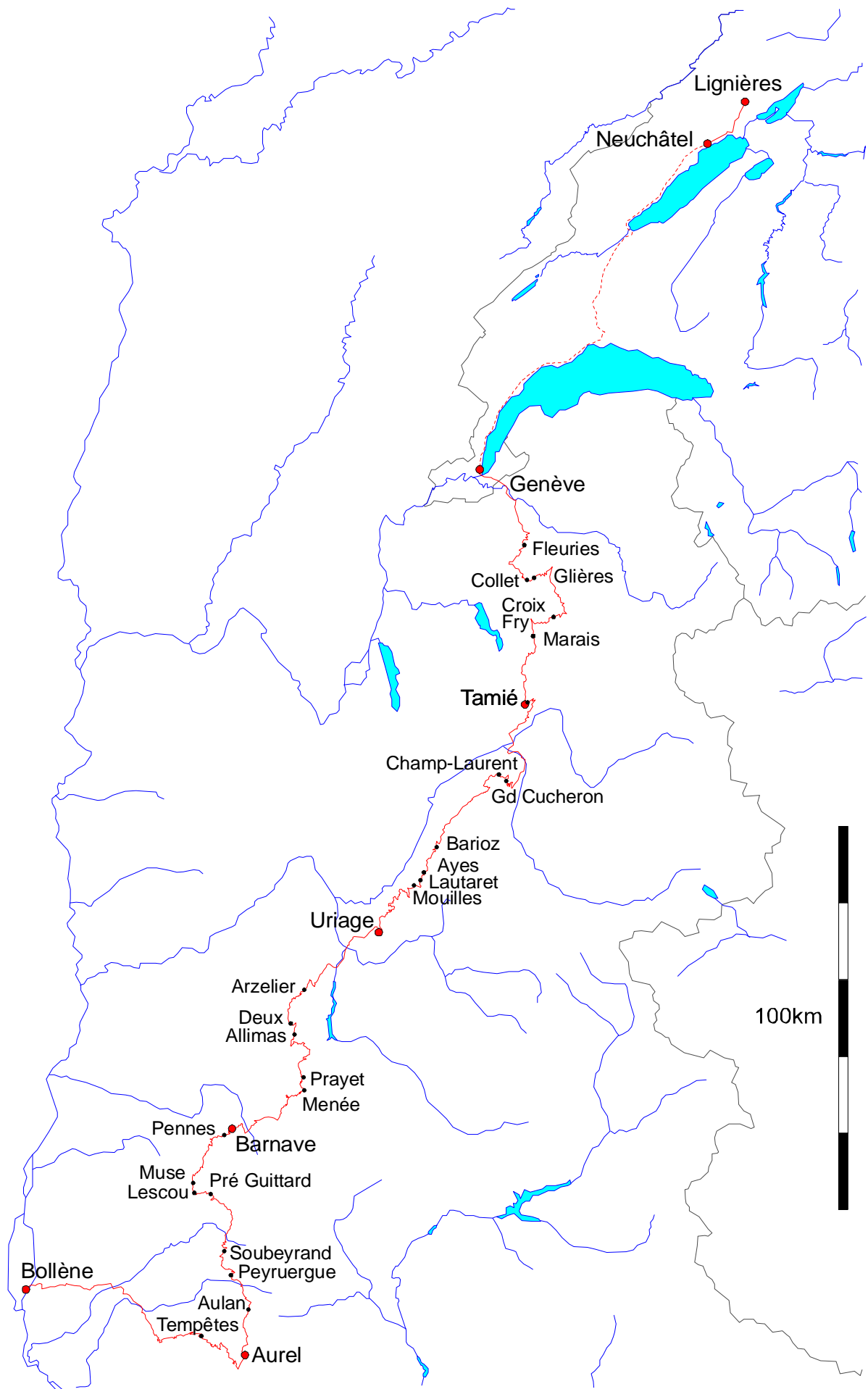
Bicycle tour 2006

5 stages, 1 - 5 July

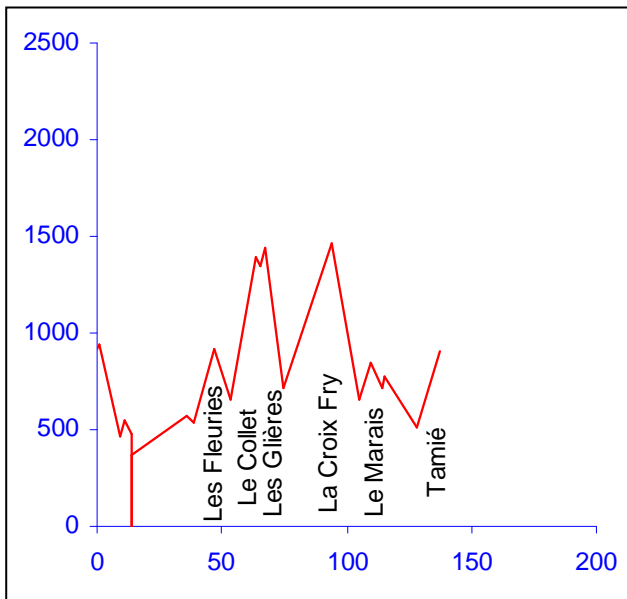
Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Genève - Tamié	137	2900
Tamié - Uriage	148	2700
Uriage - Barnave	126	2290
Barnave - Aurel	112	2450
Aurel - Bollène	99	1300
Total	622	11 640





Stage 1 (1 July 2006): Genève - Tamié



My tour 2006 was like a second trial: after giving up in 2004 because i got sick, i wanted to try again to the Mont Ventoux. This was, however, not the single goal and i also wanted to climb new passes on the way, starting from Geneva. So, i went first from Lignières to Neuchâtel and took a train to Geneva. In my small baggage, i had a new toy: a cheaper and much smaller digital camera.

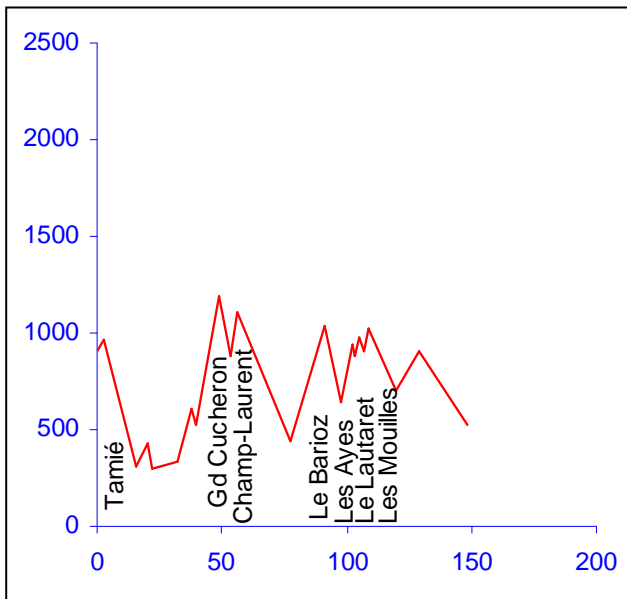
Riding from the train station out of Geneva proved very easy on this Saturday morning because, at 9 o'clock, there was not yet much traffic. I went to the south-east and passed the border to France near the Salève mountain. I continued on departmental roads towards la Roche-sur-Foron, where i was faster then the cars stuck in traffic jams. I went south to a nice and quiet little pass called col des Fleuries. A first good reason to use the new camera. Down at

Thorens, like several other cyclists, i took advantage of the fountain on the town square to refill my bottles. The air was dry and it was getting warm, so it was necessary to drink much. Then there was a long climb to the Collet pass. The landscape was nice and there were barely any cars. Between this pass and the next one, the road went only a bit down and up again. The col des Glières was thus very easy to reach. The difficulties came afterwards: first a gravel road for about 2 km, then a narrow, bumpy and very steep descent down to the Borne river. In the valley, the road was first almost flat, but it climbed again while approaching St-Jean-de-Sixt. After climbing through the resort of la Clusaz, i did not continue towards les Aravis as in 2001 but, instead, took right to the Croix-Fry. The climb was relatively hard because it was hot and because i was obviously hungry. So i had to stop at the pass to eat a sandwich and drink some lemonade. Then i enjoyed

the descent towards Thônes, but turned left (south) before reaching this town. The road was climbing again, but only gently, to the Marais pass. The descent (including a small climb in-between) brought me to Faverges, where i easily found the way south to the Tamié pass. The climb was not very steep and i reached the pass shortly before five.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Prés / Lignières	0	920	
Les Gravereules	1	940	20
St-Blaise	9	470	
Hauterive	11	550	80
Neuchâtel (train)	14	480	
Genève	14	370	
Moussy	36	570	200
La Roche-sur-Foron	39	530	
Les Fleuries	47	920	390
Thorens-Glières	53	650	
Le Collet	64	1390	740
...	65	1350	
Les Glières	67	1440	90
Le Petit Bornand	75	710	
La Croix Fry	94	1470	760
Les Clés	105	650	
Le Marais	110	840	190
Serraval	114	720	
Les Combes	115	770	50
Faverges	128	510	
Tamié	137	910	400
total	137		2920

Stage 2 (2 July 2006): Tamié - Uriage



From the col de Tamié, i went to the... collet de Tamié, which is more or less parallel. Two passes for the price of one! Then i descended to the Isère valley, heading south-west. Afterwards, i turned left into the Maurienne valley. There, a road sign indicated that all passes around were open... all except the one i wanted to cross, the Grand Cucheron. At Aiguebelle, i stopped at the gendarmerie to ask about it. The policewoman on duty was nice, but she didn't know the reason why this road was closed. I decided to try anyway. The road climbed first on the side of the valley, partly in the sun, partly in the shade of forests, towards St-Alban. Then the curves towards the pass were all in the forest. It was a nice climb, and a very quiet one since there was no traffic. Close to the pass, the road was indeed closed, but just for protection from

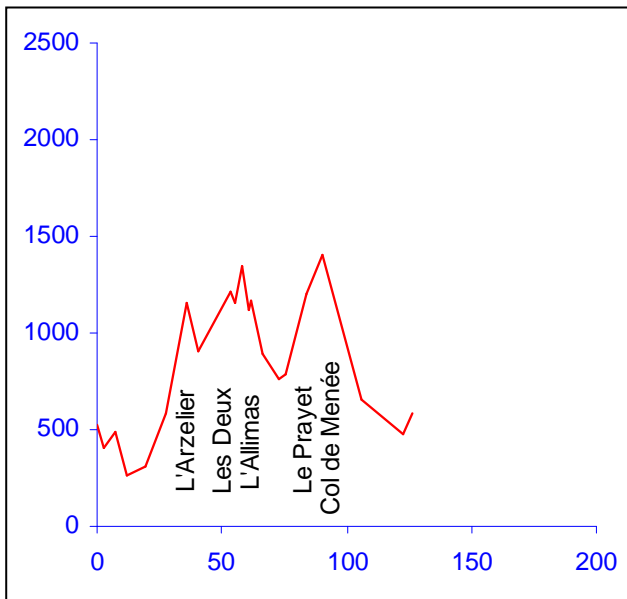
explosions carried out there during the week. No problem to ride through since it was Sunday!

After a short descent, i went to the beautiful little pass of Champ-Laurent, continuing then south-west, mostly descending, towards Allevard. Instead of joining again the Isère valley, i went across small side valleys connected by several small passes. This, however, meant many detours and climbs in the heat of the afternoon. After the Barioz, Ayes, Lautaret and Mouilles passes, i had enough and started looking for a lodging for the night. The search went long. About 40 km and 2 hours. With another road closure on the way: a bridge had been destroyed by a flood. Rather than making a detour, i preferred to cross the stream, walking on stones. Finally, it was already half past six as i found an hotel above Uriage, with a beautiful terrace and view over the valley. Riding the whole afternoon by temperatures between 30 and 35° had worn me out and i

was just happy to take a shower, eat and drink a lot, and rest.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Tamié	0	910	
Collet de Tamié	3	960	50
Frontenex	16	310	
Grésy	20	430	120
Pont-de-Grésy	22	300	
Aiguebelle	32	330	30
St-Georges	38	610	280
Coutassous	40	520	
Grand Cucheron	49	1190	670
Le Pontet	53	880	
Champ-Laurent	56	1110	230
Allevard	77	440	
Le Barioz	91	1040	600
Theys	98	640	
Les Ayes	102	940	300
Villard-Château	103	880	
Le Lautaret	105	980	100
La Boutière	107	900	
Les Mouilles	109	1020	120
Le Mas Julien	120	700	
Le Rousset	129	900	200
Le Bouloud	148	520	
total	148		2700

Stage 3 (3 July 2006): Uriage - Barnave



Leaving Uriage, i took again the direction of south-west, remaining on small roads which were going slightly up and down. As i reached the Drac river, i had to take a larger road with more traffic, but nothing so bad. Then i crossed the Drac towards Vif and, from there, started to climb towards the Arzelier pass. The air was not yet so warm, the slope was regular, even less steep in the last kilometres. And there were a few fountains along the way. The climb was thus quite easy. I continued towards the col des Deux, which has three 2 (deux) in its altitude, and which i passed as number 2 for this stage. There was very few traffic on these small but good roads. In Gresse, i bought a lemonade and asked for refilling my bottle with tap water, but the guy at the counter was not pleased by this request, and he filled only half of the bottle. Simply unbelievable.

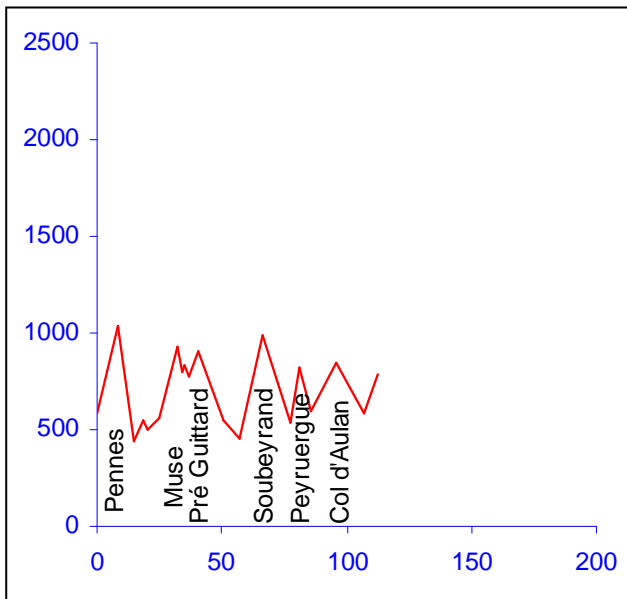
Fortunately, there were more fountains on the way. This eastern part of the Vercors is a beautiful landscape, but the weather was slowly changing, with more darker clouds around the mountains. After the Allimas pass, the descent brought me to a large road, a national road which i could not avoid taking for a few kilometres. I left it again before Clelles and went towards the Prayet pass. There was now thunder over the Vercors mountains, but i was glad that the clouds gave me some shade. From the Prayet, the road did not go down, but gently climbed further to the pass of Menée. I got some rain on the way, but it was not enough to get wet, just to cool down a bit. I did not ride over the pass itself, but went through the short tunnel, saving about 50 m in altitude and avoiding to have to carry the bike on a steep trail.

On the other side of the tunnel, i entered the Drôme department. The landscape changed, becoming drier. There were first very few houses, but their style also was different, with thick stone walls and roofs of round, light-coloured tiles. After the long descent, there was another clear sign announcing the Provence: lavender

fields. From Châtillon, i crossed the plain towards the small village of Barnave, where there was a small hotel. I may have tried to ride over one more pass this day, but i did not want to search so long as the day before and thus stopped at Barnave.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Le Bouloud	0	520	
Uriage	3	400	
Haute-Jarrie	7	490	90
Basse-Jarie	12	260	
Vif	19	310	50
St-Barthélémy	28	580	270
L'Arzelier	36	1150	570
Château-Bernard	41	900	
Les Deux	53	1220	320
Le Chaumeil	55	1150	
L'Allimas	58	1350	200
La Bâtie	61	1120	
...	62	1170	50
St-Michel-les-Portes	66	890	
Clelles-gare	73	760	
Les Oches	76	790	30
Le Prayet	84	1200	410
Col de Menée	90	1400	200
Mensac	106	650	
Moulin de Jansac	123	480	
total	123		2290

Stage 4 (4 July 2006): Barnave - Aurel



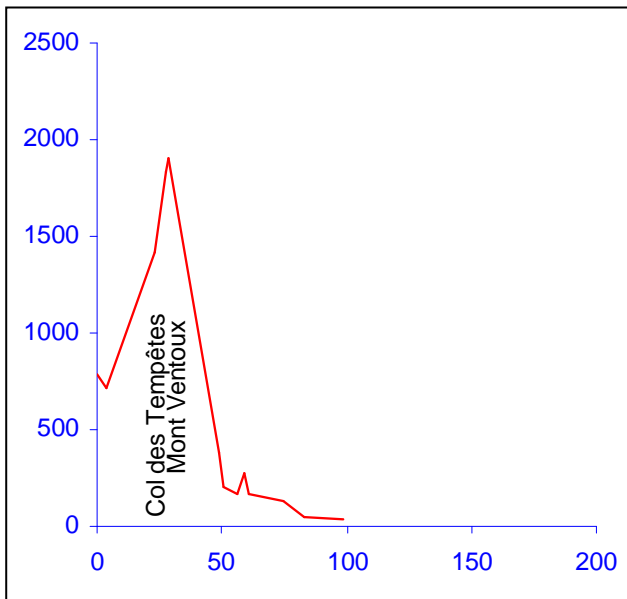
The main thing for the fourth stage could be deduced from the names of places on the way: Pennes-le-Sec, St-Nazaire-le-Désert. There was obviously no large desert to cross, but always drinking a lot would be a must. Fortunately, there were always again fountains on the way. I would have preferred to start earlier, but i did not want to leave the hotel without breakfast. So it was already quite warm as i hit the road. In the first climb, to the col de Pennes, there was no traffic and i could thus always ride on the side of the road with the most shade. The road was quite narrow but good, both uphill and downhill. A few places with fine gravel, however, made me ride very carefully. In the Roanne valley, i went left up to St-Nazaire, where i made a first stop, chatting a bit with a cyclist from Germany. Then i climbed to the small passes of Muse, Lescou

and Pré Guittard. It was beautiful, very quiet, but dry and hot. Then there was a long descent towards Rémuzat. There were headwinds and i had more to pedal than to brake. It was past noon and i made a longer stop at Rémuzat to drink a lot of lemonade (which was excellent) and eat a sandwich (which happened to be huge).

I knew that the next pass, Soubeyrand, would be the hardest of the day, especially because of the heat of the early afternoon. From then on, i took several occasions to make short stops on the road side when there was some shade to cool down a bit. In the Ennuye valley, where the vegetation was also quite dry, there were apricot orchards and lavender fields. I climbed towards the pass of Peyruergue, then descended towards the Ouvèze valley. The sun was no longer so hot as i arrived at St-Auban. Compared to my initial plan, i chose to make a shortcut and went straight south over the small col d'Aulan down to the beautiful town of Montbrun-les-Bains on its hill. From there, there was a final climb to Aurel, also a very nice town, where there was still a room available at the hotel.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Barnave	0	580	
Col de Pennes	8	1040	460
La Roanne	15	440	
...	18	550	110
Pradelle	20	500	
St-Nazaire	25	560	60
Muse	32	930	370
...	34	800	
Lescou	35	830	30
Haute-Gumiane	37	770	
Pré Guittard	41	910	140
Cornillon	51	550	
Rémuzat	57	450	
Soubeyrand	66	990	540
St-Sauveur	77	540	
Peyruergue	81	820	280
St-Auban	86	600	
Col d'Aulan	96	850	250
Montbrun	107	580	
Aurel	112	790	210
total	112		2450

Stage 5 (5 July 2006): Aurel - Bollène



I started this stage at 8 o'clock, hoping to avoid the heat for the last but not least climb of this tour, the Mont Ventoux. I had first a short descent towards Sault, then a long but gentle climb. Compared to the roads from the south (Bédoin) and from the north-west (Malaucène), i had chosen the least slope, which reached 7 to 9% only in the last few kilometres. Already in the first curves, i caught up with another cyclist from Switzerland, later with a cyclist from the region. We were thus a small group of three as we reached the Chalet Reynard, where the road from Bédoin joined ours. There, finally, the summit appeared in front of us. There was less and less vegetation and the wind was strong. I continued alone at a good pace, passed the memorial of Tom Simpson and reached the col des Tempêtes, then the summit. From Sault, i had climbed in 1 hour and

47 minutes, including some 3 minutes to take pictures. I met again the Swiss cyclist and two friends of him as they also reached the top. The wind was strong and chilly. We admired the so particular landscape of the mountain, with its light-coloured bare stones, but then we decided to have a tea at the small restaurant just below the summit.

Then came the long descent to Malaucène. The road was good and broad, but i had to be careful because of the strong wind gusts. There were many cyclists climbing this road. From Malaucène, i went further to Vaison-la-Romaine and crossed this town to the north-west. There, there were many cars on the roads, but the next part of the journey was quieter again, except for the wind. It blew from the south and i was riding west to the Rhône valley, that is mostly with a lateral wind. As i reached the train station of Bollène at about half past one, the station's counter was 'exceptionally closed'. I thus boarded the first train to the north to buy then a ticket in the train. At half past nine in the evening, after changing train several times, i was finally back in Neuchâtel.

This tour had partly been a bit hard because of the heat, but it had been one of the most enjoyable because of the few traffic encountered on the small roads i had chosen to ride to the south.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Aurel	0	790	
Sault	4	710	
Chalet Reynard	23	1420	710
Col des Tempêtes	28	1830	410
Mont Ventoux	29	1910	80
Malaucène	49	380	
Vaison-la-Romaine	51	200	
...	56	170	
...	59	270	100
Buisson	61	170	
Suze-la-Rousse	75	130	
Bollène	83	50	
Bollène gare	99	30	
total	99		1300