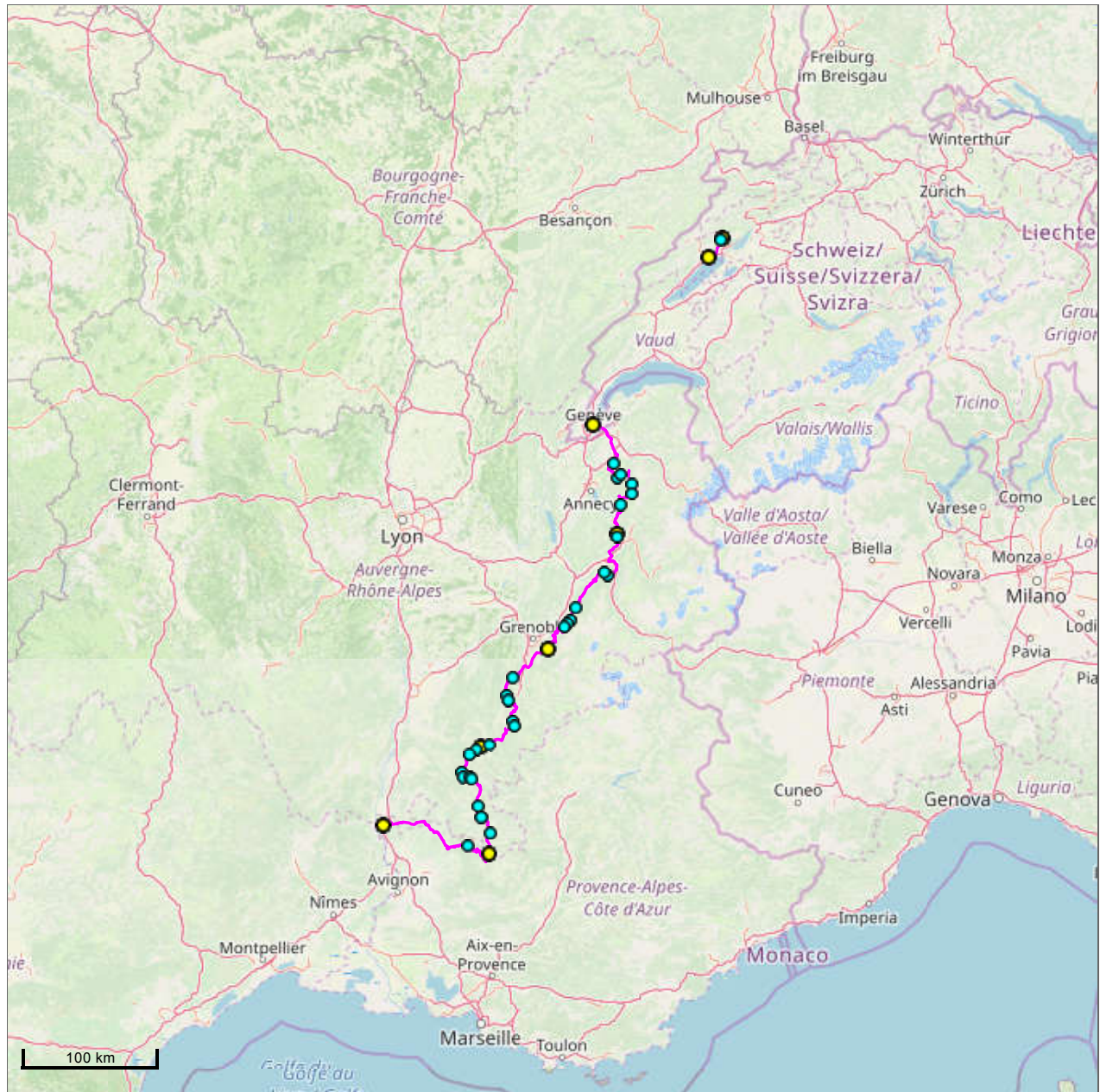
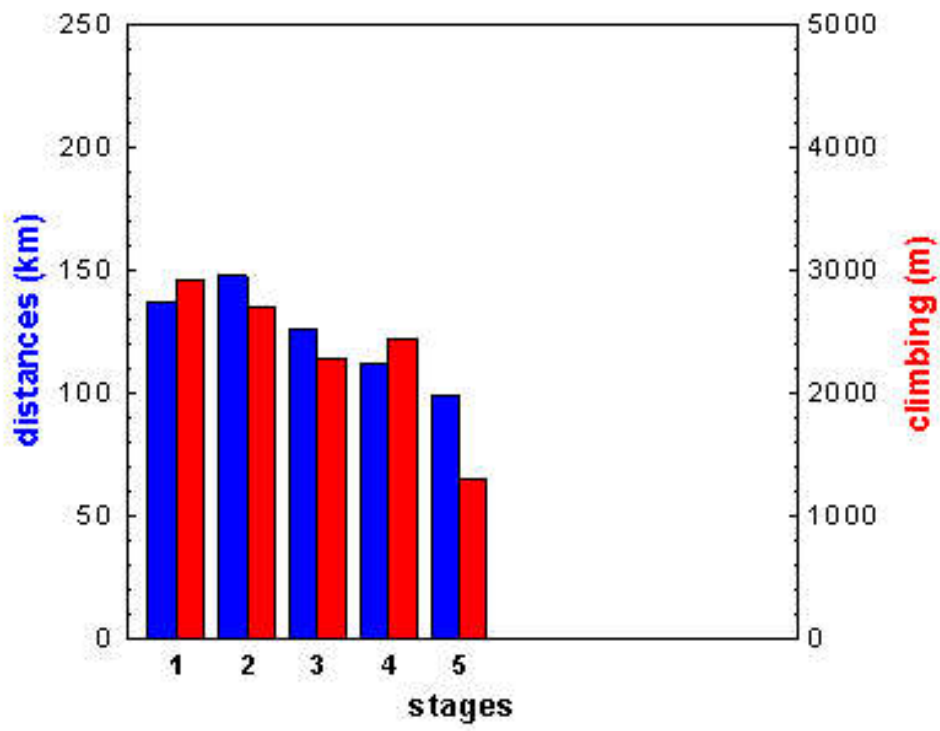


Bicycle tour 2006, 01 - 05 July

Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Lignières - Neuchâtel + Genève - Les Glières - Croix-Fry - Tamié	150	2880
Tamié - Grand Cucheron - Allevard - Uriage	145	2890
Uriage - L'Arzelier - L'Allimas - Menée - Barnave	126	2340
Barnave - Pennes - Rémuzat - St-Auban - Aurel	112	2500
Aurel - Sault - Mont Ventoux - Vaison - Bollène	99	1400
total	632	12010





Pass and high plateau of Glières, view to the east



Col de Muse, side St-Nazaire-le-Désert



Col de Peyruergue, side St-Auban-sur-l'Ouvèze



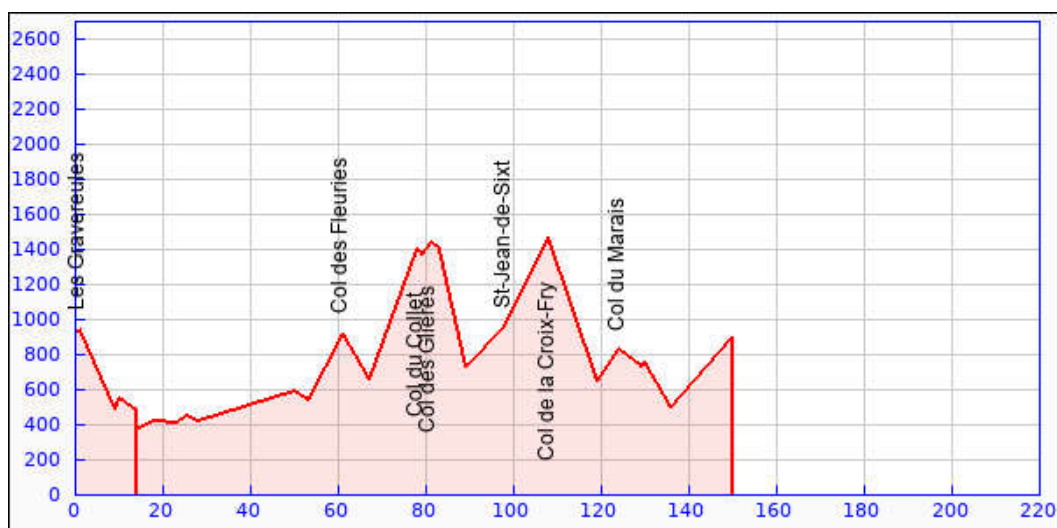
Le Ventoux, road over Chalet Reynard

Stage 1 (1 July 2006): Lignières - Neuchâtel + Genève - Les Glières - Croix-Fry - 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 Graverueules	1	940	20
St-Blaise	9	490	
La Coudre	10	550	60
Neuchâtel	14	480	
>>> Genève-Cornavin	14	370	
Chêne-Bougeries	18	420	50
Etrembières	23	410	
Viaison	25	450	40
Pont du Foron	28	420	
La Balme	50	590	170
La Roche-sur-Foron	53	540	
Col des Fleuries	61	920	380
Thorens-Glières	67	660	
Col du Collet	78	1400	740
Les Collets	79	1370	
Col des Glières	81	1440	70
Chez la Jode	83	1400	
L'Essert (Petit-Bornand)	89	730	
St-Jean-de-Sixt	98	960	230
Col de la Croix-Fry	108	1470	510
Chamossière	119	650	
Col du Marais	124	830	180
La Sauffaz	129	730	
Les Essérieux	130	760	30
Faverges	136	500	
Abbaye de Tamié	150	900	400
total	150		2880



Stage 2 (2 July 2006): Tamié - Grand Cucheron - Allevard - 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)
Abbaye de Tamié	0	900	
Col de Tamié	2	910	10
Collet de Tamié	3	960	50
Frontenex	15	330	
Grésy-sur-Isère	20	430	100
Pont-de-Grésy	23	300	
Aiguebelle	32	320	20
Le Pichet (St-Georges)	37	610	290
Le Reame	39	520	
Grand Cucheron	49	1190	670
Le Pontet	53	870	
Col de Champ-Laurent	56	1110	240
Tournaloup	62	820	
La Table	63	850	30
Arvillard	73	490	
Allevard	79	440	
Col du Barioz	91	1040	600
Theys	98	620	
Col des Ayes	102	940	320
Villard-Château	103	900	
Col du Lautaret	105	980	80
La Boutière	107	900	
Col des Mouilles	109	1020	120
Le Mont (Combe de Lancey)	120	700	
Le Requitel	124	800	100
Le Buisson	126	730	
Le Rousset	129	890	160
Les Faures	131	750	
La Croix de Pinet	135	850	100
Le Bouloud	145	500	
total	145		2890



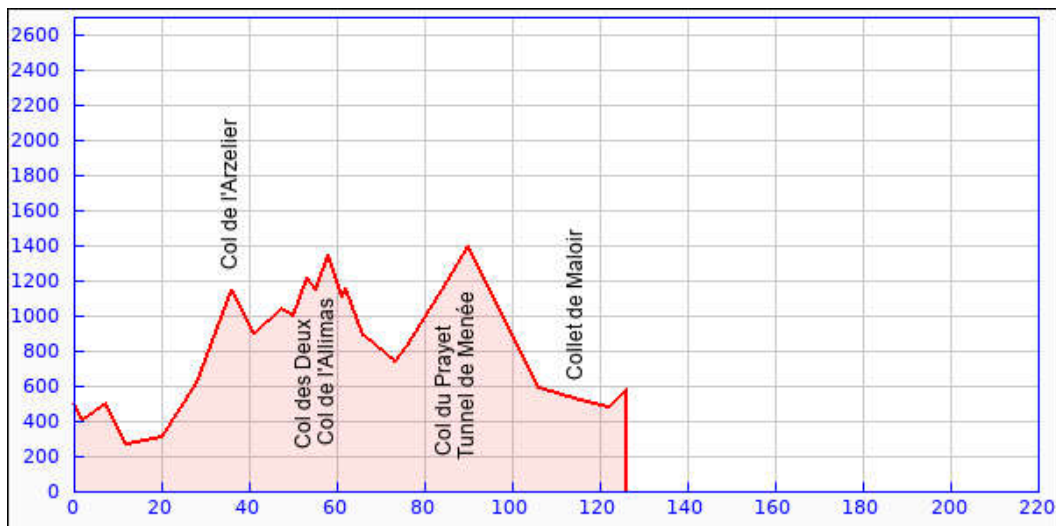
Stage 3 (3 July 2006): Uriage - L'Arzelier - L'Allimas - Menée - Barnave

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 elevation, 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 no 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 climbing 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	500	
Uriage	2	410	
Mont Rolland	7	500	90
Basse Jarrie	12	270	
Vif	20	310	40
St-Barthélémy	28	620	310
Col de l'Arzelier	36	1150	530
Château-Bernard	41	900	
Garneyre	47	1040	140
La Combe	50	1000	
Col des Deux	53	1220	220
Le Chaumeil	55	1150	
Col de l'Allimas	58	1350	200
Ravin	61	1110	
La Bâtie	62	1160	50
St-Michel-les-Portes	66	890	
La Chabannerie	73	740	
Clelles gare	76	830	90
Col du Prayet	85	1200	370
Tunnel de Menée	90	1400	200
Mensac	106	590	
Collet de Maloir	115	520	
Moulin de Jansac	122	480	
Barnave	126	580	100
total	126		2340

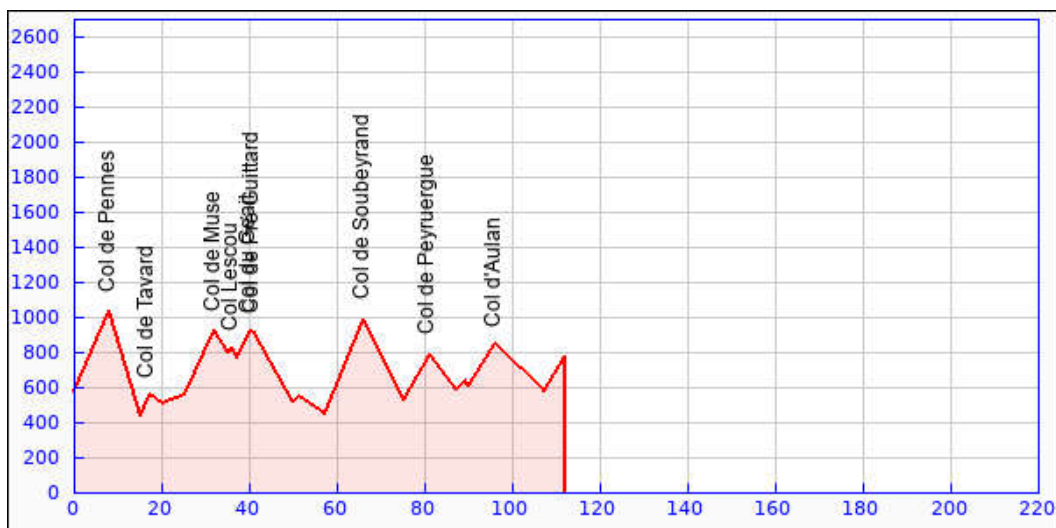


Stage 4 (4 July 2006): Barnave - Pennes - Rémuzat - St-Auban - Aurel

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
Le Clot	15	440	
Col de Tavard	17	560	120
Pradelle	20	510	
St-Nazaire-le-Désert	25	560	50
Col de Muse	32	930	370
Basse Gumiane	35	800	
Col Lescou	36	830	30
Haute Gumiane	37	770	
Col du Geail	40	920	150
Col de Pré Guittard	41	910	
Pont de Cornillon	50	520	
Cornillon-sur-l'Oule	51	550	30
Rémuzat	57	450	
Col de Soubeyrand	66	990	540
Les Traverses (St-Sauveur)	75	530	
Col de Peyruergue	81	790	260
Les Mourres (St-Auban)	87	590	
St-Auban-sur-l'Ouvèze	89	640	50
Combe du Devès	90	610	
Col d'Aulan	96	850	240
Montbrun	107	580	
Aurel	112	780	200
total	112		2500



Stage 5 (5 July 2006): Aurel - Sault - Mont Ventoux - Vaison - 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.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Aurel	0	780	
Sault	5	750	
Roumane (Sault)	6	600	
Combe de la Font de Margot	17	1260	660
Chalet Reynard	24	1420	160
Col des Tempêtes	29	1830	410
Mont Ventoux	30	1910	80
Malaucène	50	330	
Vaison-la-Romaine	60	200	
Piquebas (Vaison)	66	180	
Le Cordier (Buisson)	69	270	90
Buisson	71	180	
Suze-la-Rousse	85	100	
Bollène	93	60	
Bollène	99	50	
total	99		1400

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.

