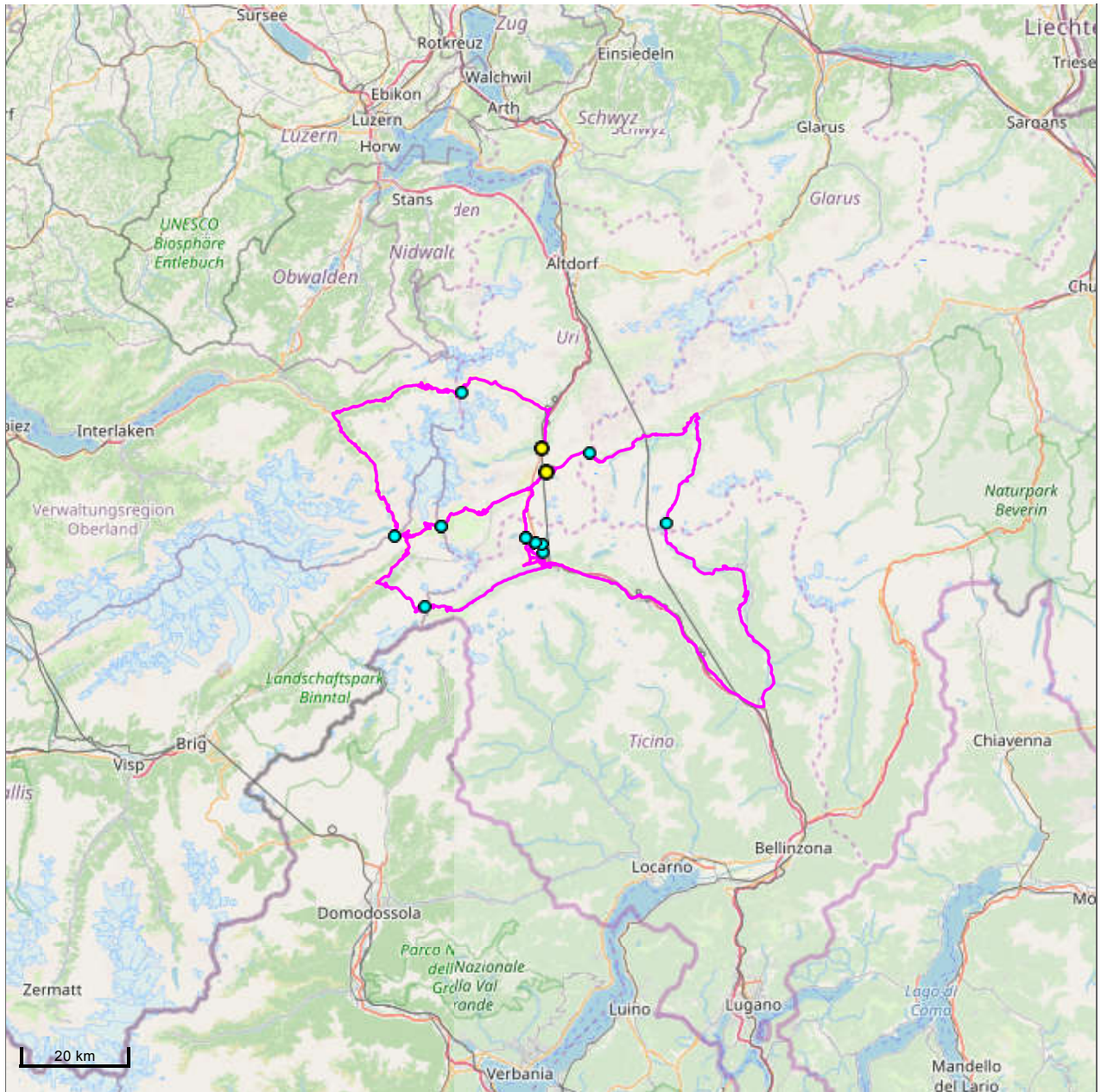
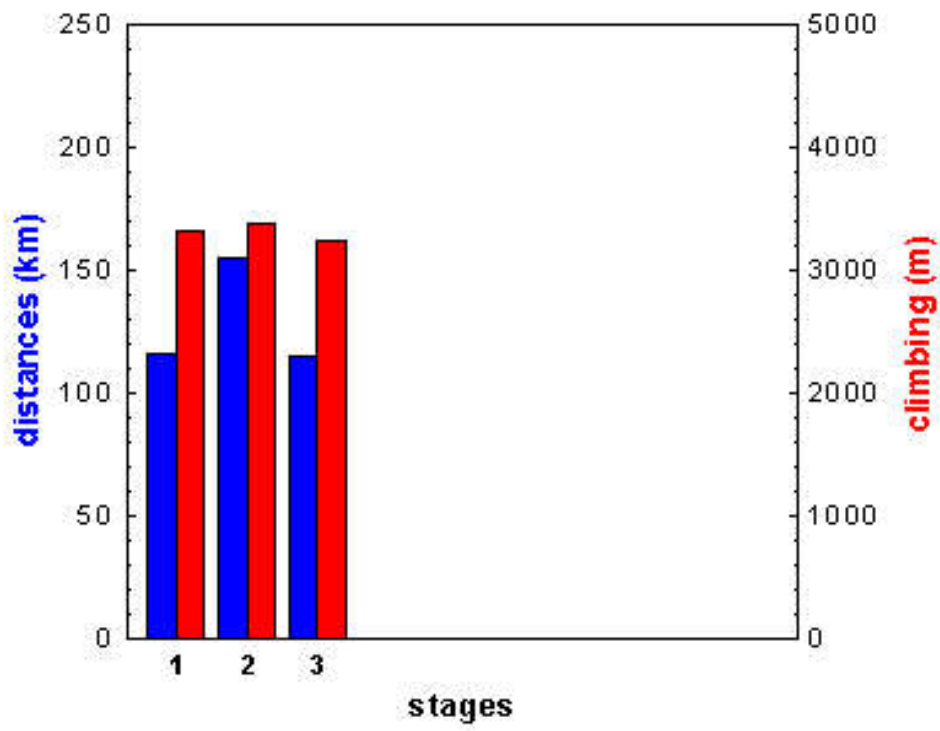


# Bicycle tour 2014, 08 - 11 August

Patrick Schleppei

| stage  | distance (km) | climbing (m) |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| Andermatt - Gottardo - Nufenen - Furka - Andermatt   | 116           | 3320         |
| Andermatt - Oberalp - Lucmagn - Gottardo - Andermatt | 155           | 3380         |
| Andermatt - Furka - Grimsel - Susten - Göschenen     | 115           | 3250         |
| <b>total</b>   | <b>386</b>    | <b>9950</b>  |





Gletsch and the roads to the Furka and Grimsel passes



The lower Medel valley from Curaglia, with a glimpse of Disentis/Mustér



The dam of Sontga Maria in the upper Medel valley



The Urseren valley, Realp and the first switchbacks to the Furka



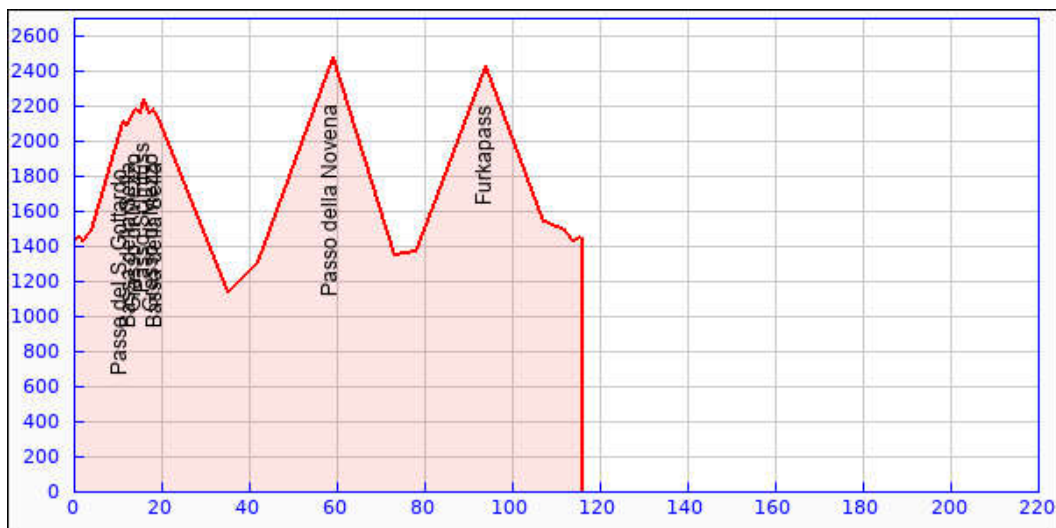
## Stage 1 (8 August 2014): Andermatt - Gottardo - Nufenen - Furka - Andermatt

For my tour 2014, i decided to ride the so-called alpine star. Years ago, it was a brevet by the Swiss Touring Club (TCS). Even if it has no longer this status, nobody hinders to ride this alpine star as a personal challenge. It consists of three loops around Andermatt, each to ride in one day over three passes. Three times three makes... seven. Because two of the passes are climbed twice in different days.

I travelled to Andermatt with my girlfriend Angelika, who also wanted to climb some high passes. The first day, we rode together up to the most famous pass of our country, the [Gotthard](#). The road is not very steep, but we had some headwind. I was therefore riding in first position and tried hard to keep the right pace, just a bit below what would be my own pace. In one hour and a quarter, we climbed so from Hospental up to the pass. After taking some pictures, we took a small road leading up to [Bassa della Sella](#). This was obviously not part of the traditional alpine star, but a good way for me to still find some new pass. As we were approaching, we saw two cyclists stopped at the pass. Funny enough, these were two members of the [Club des Cent Cols](#): one, Nathalie, we knew already, the other, Jean-Philippe we met for the first time. After some warm greetings, we went together to the next two passes, first [Grasso di Mezzo](#) (nice but not counting for the Club des Cent Cols), second [Passo Scimfuss](#) (counting for the Club, even if not really a pass between summits, only across a ridge). Since Nathalie and Jean-Philippe wanted then to ride up to the Sella dam, we parted on the way back. And, from the Gotthard, Angelika was heading back to the north while i was heading south. Good-bye kiss, and see you later in Andermatt.

Meanwhile it was already noon as i went into the descent to Airolo. I took first the new road, but further down it becomes a highway and cyclists then have to take the old road with some cobblestone stretches. I was still feeling their vibrations in my fingers when i went from Airolo up into the Bedretto valley, towards the [Novena](#) pass. It is first a very gentle climb but then, after around 10 km, it becomes quite steep. It was not easy as the weather was cold and wet, the last part being completely in the fog. Due to the poor weather, there was not much traffic. And this would hold for the entire tour. I was glad when i reached the pass and could drink a warm tea in the restaurant. On the other side of the pass, clouds were moving around, but there was not really fog on the road. When i reached Ulrichen in the Rhone valley it was already half past three and i still had a big pass in front of me. I bought some energy in form of a banana at a store and went on. From Oberwald, the climb to Gletsch then to the [Furka](#) pass was regular and not very steep. My legs felt good, better than earlier in the fog. The wild landscape, the winding road and the cogwheel railway were spectacular and gave me some nice pictures. At the pass there was some cold wind and i went thus straight on. The descent reminded me that the last time i had had an [accident](#), but this time there was no nasty motorhome and i came down smoothly and healthy. I arrived in Andermatt a bit after 18. This first branch of the alpine star had been quite long but very enjoyable.

|                              | distance (km) | altitude (m) | climbing (m) |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Andermatt                    | 0             | 1440         |              |
| Andermatt                    | 1             | 1450         | 10           |
| Tristelböden                 | 2             | 1430         |              |
| Hospental                    | 4             | 1490         | 60           |
| <b>Passo del S. Gottardo</b> | 11            | 2110         | 620          |
| Ospizio S. Gottardo          | 12            | 2090         |              |
| <b>Bassa della Sella</b>     | 13            | 2140         | 50           |
| <b>Grasso di Mezzo</b>       | 14            | 2180         | 40           |
| Sorescia                     | 15            | 2160         |              |
| <b>Passo Scimfuss</b>        | 16            | 2240         | 80           |
| Sorescia                     | 17            | 2160         |              |
| <b>Grasso di Mezzo</b>       | 18            | 2180         | 20           |
| <b>Bassa della Sella</b>     | 19            | 2140         |              |
| Ospizio S. Gottardo          | 20            | 2090         |              |
| Airolo                       | 35            | 1140         |              |
| Ossaco                       | 42            | 1310         | 170          |
| <b>Passo della Novena</b>    | 59            | 2480         | 1170         |
| Ulrichen                     | 73            | 1350         |              |
| Oberwald                     | 78            | 1370         | 20           |
| Gletsch                      | 84            | 1760         | 390          |
| <b>Furkapass</b>             | 94            | 2430         | 670          |
| Realp                        | 107           | 1540         |              |
| Hospental                    | 112           | 1490         |              |
| Tristelböden                 | 114           | 1430         |              |
| Andermatt                    | 115           | 1450         | 20           |
| Andermatt                    | 116           | 1440         |              |
| <b>total</b>                 | <b>116</b>    |              | <b>3320</b>  |

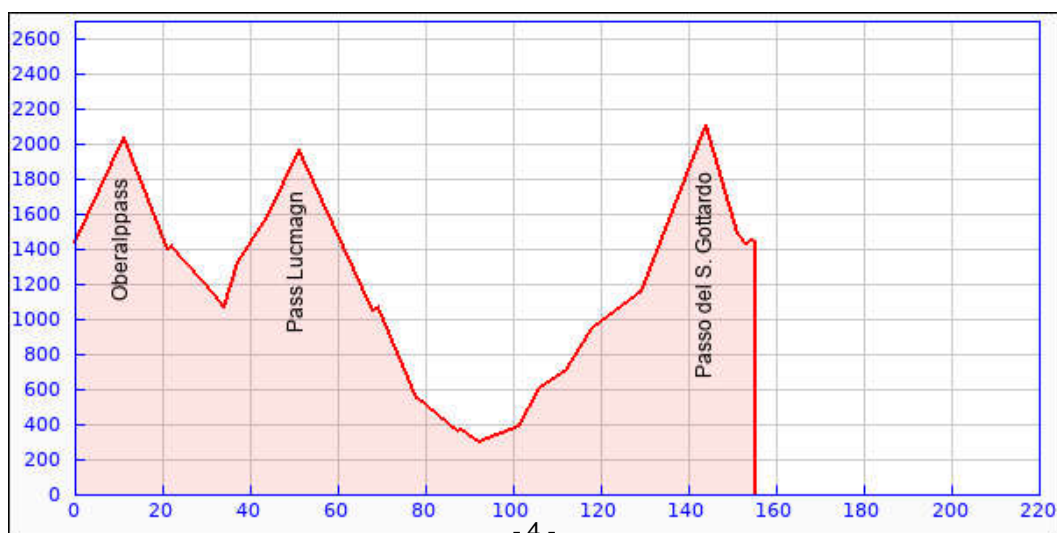


## Stage 2 (10 August 2014): Andermatt - Oberalp - Lucmagn - Gottardo - Andermatt

The second loop was planned for the next day, Saturday, and then it was raining. We made us ready, but the forecasts were too bad and we decided to take a day of rest. We went by car to Sedrun. When we realised that the weather was notwithstanding clearing up, it was too late to change plans again. Sometimes old wisdom is better than weather science: morning rain should not stop the pilgrim. Anyway, the next day we were on our bicycles again and went up to the [Oberalp](#) pass. Starting from Andermatt, it is quite an easy climb, the slope becoming really gentle after Nätschen. It was a bit cool with some headwind, but nothing special. From the Oberalp pass, Angelika went up to the nearby [Pass Tiarms](#). I had been there two years before by mountain bike. This time, with race bicycle and cleat shoes, i didn't want to try this rough way. I let Angelika go alone and continued my round-trip with the descent towards Sedrun, then Disentis. In Disentis, i turned right, went down to cross the Rhine river and went up into the Medel valley. The very first part was in a canyon with several tunnels, but then the valley was more open, with many green meadows and some villages or hamlets. As i was climbing towards the [Lucmagn](#) pass, i came also closer and closer to the clouds. It was quite chilly again, but fortunately it didn't rain. Starting in the gallery along the lake at the pass, however, the road was partly wet. Because it is made of concrete, it was also shaking quite a bit. As i reached Campra, the rain began, and after a few minutes it was already a heavy rainfall. Then, in a sharp left turn, there was a sign for bicycles to leave the main road and take a small road along the side of the valley. I was glad to leave the concrete road and its traffic, but the rain remained, with also some fog. This improved slowly as i was riding down. After the different hamlets of Acquarossa, i reached the bottom of the Blenio valley and the rain soon stopped. In Malvaglia, back on the main road, i could take off my rain jacket and continue towards Biasca.

Biasca was the lowest point of the day, and also of the whole tour, because then i turned right, up into the Leventina valley. There was much traffic on the highway because it was Sunday and the end of vacations for many people. Unfortunately for me, some of the traffic was on the same road than me. The Leventina valley is not steep, but it has like two steeper steps along the way, one after Giornico and one after Faido. These are also the places where the train uses spiralled tunnels. After the first of these steps, the bicycle route left the main road, but i could not rejoice long: soon it was raining again, albeit not so heavily. Near Faido, i feared that i would have to turn back because the bicycle route was... a field of mud, but it was only a short stretch where they had used heavy forestry machines. After Faido, i was on the main road again: no mud, but many cars. After Airolo, the rain stopped and the cars were either waiting to cross the tunnel or taking the new road over the [Gotthard pass](#). I went a different way, taking the old road, the Tremola road, made of cobblestones. After my [1992 tour](#), this was my second climb of the Tremola. Unfortunately, i could not see much of it because there was thick fog all around. Anyway, traffic, than rain, then fog, and the cobblestones, this was all no big deal and would not prevent me reaching the third pass of the day. It just took its time, and it was already past 18 as i reached the Gotthard. The descent, finally, was good because there was no fog on that side and the road was mostly dry.

|                              | distance (km) | altitude (m) | climbing (m) |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Andermatt                    | 0             | 1440         |              |
| <b>Oberalppass</b>           | 11            | 2040         | 600          |
| Rueras                       | 21            | 1400         |              |
| Camischolas (Sedrun)         | 22            | 1420         | 20           |
| Mustér / Disentis            | 32            | 1140         |              |
| Fontanivas                   | 34            | 1070         |              |
| Curaglia                     | 37            | 1330         | 260          |
| Sogn Gions                   | 44            | 1590         | 260          |
| <b>Pass Lucmagn</b>          | 51            | 1970         | 380          |
| Hospezi Lucmagn              | 52            | 1920         |              |
| Monti Schi                   | 68            | 1050         |              |
| Pianezza                     | 69            | 1070         | 20           |
| Comprovasco                  | 78            | 550          |              |
| Malvaglia                    | 87            | 360          |              |
| Ponte Leggiuna               | 88            | 370          | 10           |
| Biasca                       | 92            | 300          |              |
| Giornico                     | 101           | 390          | 90           |
| Nivo                         | 106           | 610          | 220          |
| Faido                        | 112           | 710          | 100          |
| Rodi                         | 118           | 950          | 240          |
| Airolo                       | 129           | 1160         | 210          |
| <b>Passo del S. Gottardo</b> | 144           | 2110         | 950          |
| Hospental                    | 151           | 1490         |              |
| Tristelböden                 | 153           | 1430         |              |
| Andermatt                    | 154           | 1450         | 20           |
| Andermatt                    | 155           | 1440         |              |
| <b>total</b>                 | <b>155</b>    |              | <b>3380</b>  |



## Stage 3 (11 August 2014): Andermatt - Furka - Grimsel - Susten - Göschenen

Angelika had left Andermatt on Sunday. After breakfast, the first thing i had to do this Monday morning was thus to bring my remaining luggage to the post office add send it home. Then i could leave Andermatt towards Realp, the same road than last Friday. The weather was cloudy again and the summer 2014 was still not in sight. The open question was if these clouds would produce some rain. And the answer was no for the first climb to the **Furka**. As i reached the pass, however, a slight rainfall began. Rain in the descent is never funny, but at least it was not too cold and then it stopped as i reached Gletsch. Now i could take off my rain jacket and climb again, towards the **Grimsel** pass. From this side, this was a very easy climb. And a quiet one since there were only a few cars or motorcycles around. And barely any other cyclist. I stopped at the pass to have a warm drink, but then the rain started again. Strangely enough, it is then, as i was riding down in the rain, that i saw many other cyclists. As before from the Furka, i had to adapt the speed of the descent to the wet road, but finally everything went smoothly. And the rain receded again. As i reached Innertkirchen, the same pattern seemed to repeat itself for the third and last pass of the day, and i started the climb to the **Susten** without rain. However, the pattern did not hold long and i was only in Furen as the rain started again. For the remaining of the day.

|                    | distance (km) | altitude (m) | climbing (m) |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Andermatt          | 0             | 1440         |              |
| Andermatt          | 1             | 1450         | 10           |
| Tristelböden       | 2             | 1430         |              |
| Hospental          | 4             | 1490         | 60           |
| Realp              | 9             | 1540         | 50           |
| <b>Furkapass</b>   | 22            | 2430         | 890          |
| Gletsch            | 32            | 1760         |              |
| <b>Grimselpass</b> | 38            | 2170         | 410          |
| Räterichsboden     | 45            | 1770         |              |
| Guttannen          | 56            | 1060         |              |
| Innertkirchen      | 64            | 620          |              |
| Gadmen             | 77            | 1200         | 580          |
| <b>Sustenpass</b>  | 92            | 2220         | 1020         |
| Wassen             | 110           | 910          |              |
| Merggelen          | 111           | 930          | 20           |
| Watingen           | 112           | 900          |              |
| Göschenen          | 115           | 1110         | 210          |
| <b>total</b>       | <b>115</b>    |              | <b>3250</b>  |

Well, the rain was not too cold and climbing was not too difficult, even if not very enjoyable. After a warm drink at the pass, however, there was still a long descent. And to make things even wearier, fog entered the scene again. Anyway, there was not much choice: hold on and ride carefully. After finally reaching Wassen, i was glad to have to climb again because this warmed me up. For a real alpine star with its three loops, i would have had to ride up to Andermatt. This summer, however, the Schöllenen road was closed for bicycles in that direction because of construction work. For this reason, i had to stop at Göschenen and wait for the next train to Zurich. First priority, however, was a warm coffee!

This tour had been the first of my yearly summer tours to start every day from the same place. With only three days it was also among the shortest, but with an average of more than 3300 m of climbing per day an intensive one. And the weather... well... like this summer 2014!

