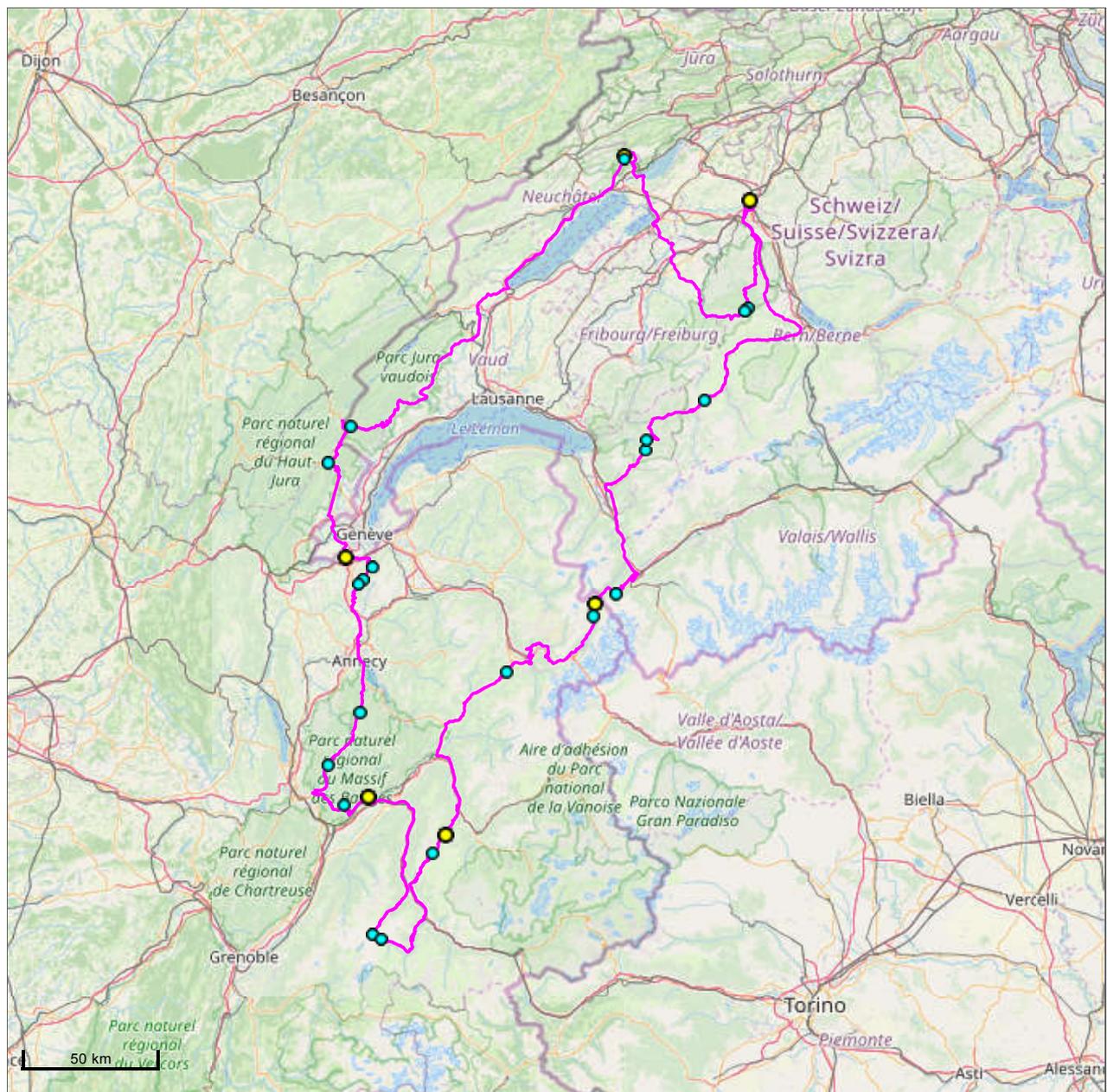
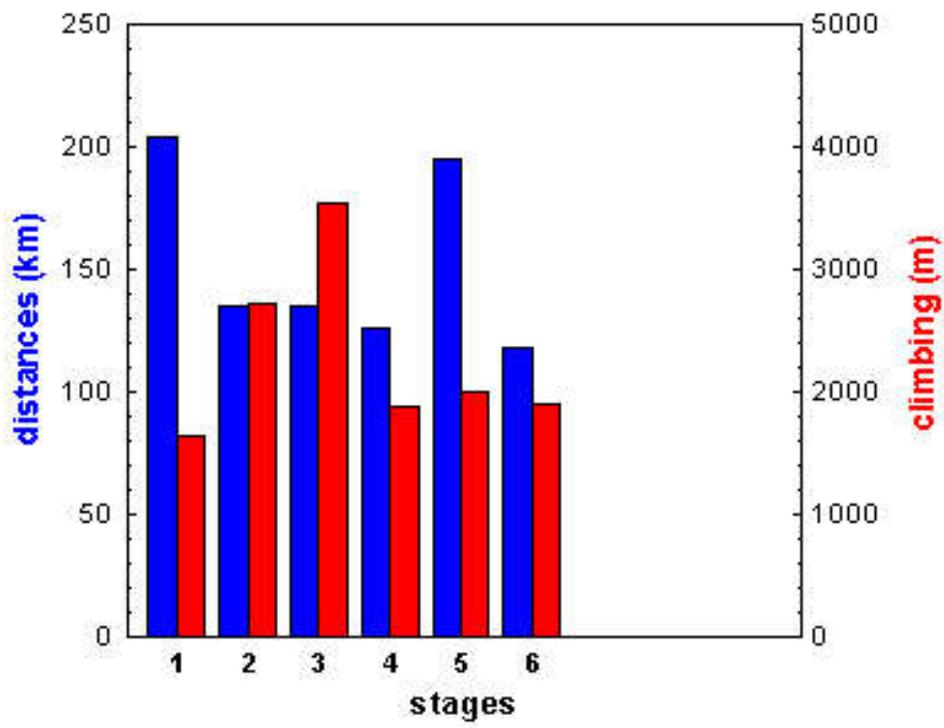


# Bicycle tour 1996, 21 - 26 July

Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Lignières - Orbe - Givrine - Faucille - St-Julien	194	1740
St-Julien - Salève - Plainpalais - St-Pierre-d'Albigny	135	2780
St-Pierre-d'Albigny - Croix-de-Fer - Madeleine - Celliers	135	3530
Celliers - Albertville - Chamonix - Vallorcine	126	1890
Vallorcine - Forclaz - Mosses - Saanen - Zollikofen	195	2040
Zollikofen - Gurnigel - Lignières	120	1930
<b>total</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>13910</b>





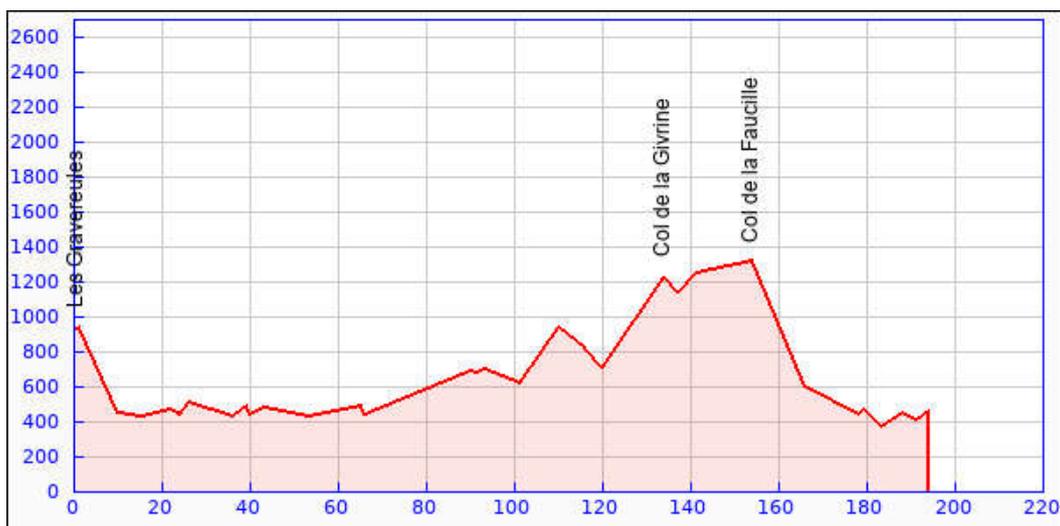
View to the Dôle mountain from the Givrine pass

## Stage 1 (21 July 1996): Lignières - Orbe - Givrine - Faucille - St-Julien

Passes in the French Alps were the main goal of my 1996 bicycle tour. I started once again from my parent's home. It was quite cold on the heights of Lignières on that early Sunday morning and i put a newspaper under my jersey just for the first descent, down to St-Blaise. From there, i followed the northern shore of the lake of Neuchâtel. I rode partly on main roads, partly on small roads, partly on bike paths. It was not always easy to chose between roads with much traffic and other ones going always up and down. At least, i had a good allied for the whole day: the 'Bise', the northeast wind, blowing parallel to the Jura mountains.

From Yverdon, at the end of the lake, i could ride on good country roads. Slowly, i was climbing and leaving the foot of the mountains on my left side, and finally i reached the [Givrine](#) pass, which is just before the border from Switzerland to France. I did, however, not go far away from this ridge of the Jura and crossed it again further south, at the [Col de la Faucille](#). Coming from that side, it was only a small, very gentle climb, and i could take advantage of the longer and steeper hillside for the descent. I reentered Switzerland near Meyrin, not far from the CERN (Centre Européen de Recherches Nucléaires, where the World Wide Web was invented). I was for the first time in the canton of Geneva by bicycle. Just opposite to the idea that i had from the city of Geneva, the countryside around proved to be very bicycle-friendly: well marked routes, good bike paths, not so many dangerous crossings. One thing, however, seems to be rare in the villages around Geneva: hotels. Rather than riding into the city to find one, i went further south, crossed the border again and stopped in St-Julien. Thanks to the Bise, i had been able to make a long first stage.

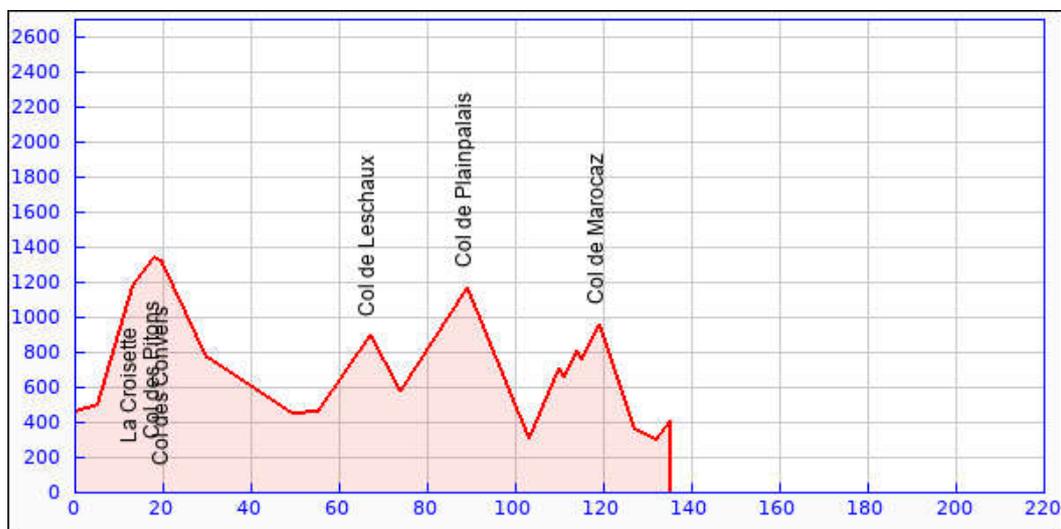
	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Prés (Lignières)	0	920	
<a href="#">Les Graverueules</a>	1	940	20
St-Blaise	10	450	
Neuchâtel	15	430	
Colombier	22	470	40
Cortailod	24	440	
Bevaix	26	510	70
Vaumarcus	36	430	
La Lance	39	490	60
Concise	40	440	
Onnens	43	480	40
Yverdon	53	430	
Orbe	65	490	60
Granges-St-Martin (Orbe)	66	440	
Les Monod (Mollens)	90	690	250
Moulin de la Goille	91	680	
Ballens	93	700	20
Marais-Girard	101	620	
St-George	110	940	320
Le Vaud	116	820	
Le Muids	120	710	
<a href="#">Col de la Givrine</a>	134	1230	520
La Cure	137	1140	
Les Dappes	141	1250	110
<a href="#">Col de la Faucille</a>	154	1320	70
Gex	166	600	
Sur Allondon	178	440	
Bourdigny-Dessus	179	470	30
Peney-Dessous	183	370	
Bernex	188	450	80
Lully	191	410	
St-Julien-en-Genevois	194	460	50
<b>total</b>	<b>194</b>		<b>1740</b>



## Stage 2 (22 July 1996): St-Julien - Salève - Plainpalais - St-Pierre-d'Albigny

The breakfast at the hotel in St-Julien was under average, for the taste, for the amount, for the choice and for the surroundings. At least, the weather was still good as i hit the road and went first towards Collonges and the up to the Salève. It was a small and steep road with very few traffic on that Monday morning. Once at the **Croisette** pass, i continued along the ridge, appreciating the view, sometimes (right) to Geneva and the Jura, sometimes (left) to the French Alps. The road went up to the **Pitons** pass, then down over the **Convers** pass to Cruseilles, joining then the main road to Annecy. There was much traffic this way. And then i could not avoid to cross the city of Annecy. It was only after turning right from the lakeside road that it was quieter again. I went along valleys with two small passes between them, **Leschaux** and **Plainpalais**. It was around noon when i arrived on the first one, and i just took something out of my pockets as a lunch. In the descent from the second of these passes, i found a small road cutting over the mountain to the Isère valley, avoiding to have to ride through Chambéry. This led me over a further small pass (**Marocaz**). I was now around 2 o'clock and i was getting hungry. I wanted to buy something as i arrived in the valley but the shops were closed: the south-european habit of a siesta obviously extended so far. I had to continue with an empty stomach. Then, instead of crossing the Isère and continuing towards the Maurienne, i went up to the town of St-Pierre-d'Albigny. I just wanted to drink and eat something there, but then i decided that i was quite tired and that i should stop there for this stage.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
St-Julien-en-Genevois	0	460	
Collonges	5	500	40
<b>La Croisette</b>	13	1180	680
<b>Col des Pitons</b>	18	1340	160
<b>Col des Convers</b>	20	1310	
Cruseilles	30	770	
Annecy	49	450	
Sévrier	55	460	10
<b>Col de Leschaux</b>	67	900	440
Pont Detrier (Lescheraines)	74	580	
<b>Col de Plainpalais</b>	89	1170	590
St-Alban	103	310	
Curienne	110	710	400
Boyat	111	660	
Les Roues (Montoux)	114	810	150
La Guillère	115	760	
<b>Col de Marocaz</b>	119	960	200
St-Laurent (Cruet)	127	360	
St-Jean-de-la-Porte	132	300	
St-Pierre-d'Albigny	135	410	110
<b>total</b>	<b>135</b>		<b>2780</b>



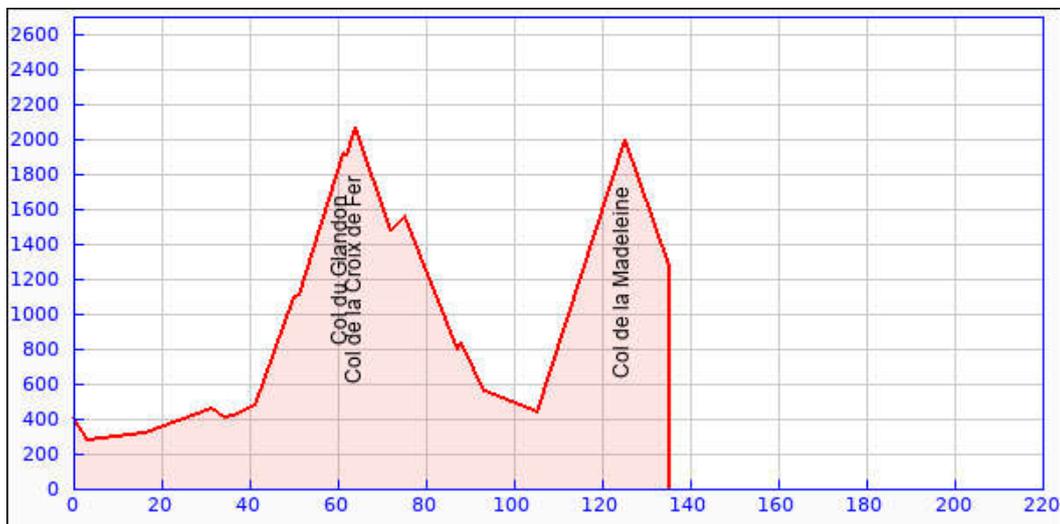
## Stage 3 (23 July 1996): St-Pierre-d'Albigny - Croix-de-Fer - Madeleine - Celliers

To cross the Isère valley was no problem, but then i came on the main road of the Maurienne, and this was almost the hell. There were so many lorries that i was almost continuously passed by them. And no bike path to escape and find some security. This very uncomfortable situation had just one better aspect: the wind made by the trucks helped me and i could ride with a good speed. From Epierre on, i could pull off and take a smaller road, first on the left then on the right side. At St-Etienne-de-Cuines, i left the Maurienne valley (a first time) and went up to the first big alpine pass pass of this tour, the [Glandon](#). I was a long but nice climb. There were few motor vehicles and even fewer cyclists.

From the pass, i did not descend far, but climbed again to the neighbor pass of the [Croix de Fer](#) (iron cross). I had only 2 km to climb and i was therefore soon at this second pass. The descent was long an nice, but the roads in the town of St-Jean were just a field of bumps and potholes. Then i was in the Maurienne again and i had to take again the road with that terrible heavy traffic. Not for long, at least, since i turned right before La Chambre. I did not want to get as hungry and thirsty as during the previous stage, and i stopped there to buy some food and drink.

Dark clouds were gathering in the sky as i began to climb towards the [Madeleine](#) pass. After only a few kilometers, a thunderstorm broke out. I had to stop at a small house along the road as it rained heavily. But not for long. After some 10 minutes, i could start again. The road was wet, but this was no problem as i was riding uphill. After two further short stops, i reached the pass. There was a roadside sign indicating 2000 m. On my (official) map, however, the elevation of the pass was indicated as 1993 m. And i have another map giving only 1984 m. Believe whatever you want, i retain 'approximately 2000'. The weather was still uncertain and i did not stay long at the pass. In the descent, i found an hotel at Celliers. I did not only look good, i was really a good place to stop for the night. Three minutes after my arrival, it began to rain.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
St-Pierre-d'Albigny	0	410	
Carouge	3	280	
Aiguebelle	16	320	40
La Chapelle	31	460	140
St-Rémy-de-Maurienne	34	410	
Le Girard	36	420	10
St-Etienne-de-Cuines	41	480	60
Le Villard Martinan	50	1100	620
Le Châtelet	51	1110	10
<a href="#">Col du Glandon</a>	61	1920	810
pt. 1907	62	1910	
<a href="#">Col de la Croix de Fer</a>	64	2070	160
Malcrozet	72	1480	
St-Jean-d'Arves	75	1560	80
Le Crêt	87	800	
Pierrepin	88	840	40
St-Jean-de-Maurienne	93	560	
St-Avre	105	440	
<a href="#">Col de la Madeleine</a>	125	2000	1560
Celliers	135	1280	
<b>total</b>	<b>135</b>		<b>3530</b>



## Stage 4 (24 July 1996): Celliers - Albertville - Chamonix - Vallorcine

The next morning, it was still raining. After breakfast, i decided to wait a little, hoping for the rain to stop. After an hour, as the weather was still bad, i finally put my rain jacket on and started the descent towards Feissons. Because of the wet road, i had to ride carefully. The rain finally receded as i was riding in the valley towards Albertville and Ugine. From Ugine, i went to the Arly gorge and climbed to Flumet, then further along this high valley to [Megève](#) (in the winter a ski resort). Then there was a descent again, down to St-Gervais. Fortunately, the road was now dry.

There were traffic jams in St-Gervais, but, with my bike, i could pass the car lanes. Then, when i arrived in the Arve valley, i wanted to ride to the right, to Chamonix. The problem, however, was again the heavy traffic. There were so many trucks that i did not dare taking the main road. Instead, i first went the opposite way, crossed to the other side of the valley and took a small road. I was not sure if this was the best because this small road did not appear to go through on my map. I asked some people and they told me that there was a passage. And they were right, even if i must have been lucky to find the right way through the woods between Vaudagne and Les Houches. Anyway, i arrived safely in Chamonix. On this gray day, the place was quite ugly: many cars around, but no mountains in sight. Could have been any average city at rush hour, not a famous alpine station. I did not stop there at all.

On the way to Argentière, it began to rain again. As the rain was getting worse and worse, i stopped a while and found some shelter. After a while, however, i began to feel cold and decided to go on and climbed to the pass of [Les Montets](#). After a short descent, drenched and cold, i stopped at the next best hotel. At Vallorcine. Not far from the Swiss border, but these few kilometers made a big difference on the price when i phoned my brother Yves about the next stage.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Celliers	0	1280	
Feissons	16	410	
Albertville	33	340	
Ugine	42	410	70
Flumet	56	910	500
Panloup (Flumet)	59	1020	110
Le Jorraz (Praz-sur-Arly)	60	1000	
Praz-sur-Arly	61	1030	30
Tirecorde (Praz-sur-Arly)	62	1020	
<a href="#">Megève</a>	67	1110	90
Le Fayet	81	580	
Chedde	83	590	10
Bois de Joux (Servoz)	90	860	270
Servoz	91	810	
Tré les Balmes (Vaudagne)	98	1110	300
Les Houches	101	950	
Chamonix	110	1040	90
Argentière	118	1250	210
<a href="#">Col des Montets</a>	123	1460	210
Vallorcine	126	1260	
<b>total</b>	<b>126</b>		<b>1890</b>



## Stage 5 (25 July 1996): Vallorcine - Forclaz - Mosses - Saanen - Zollikofen

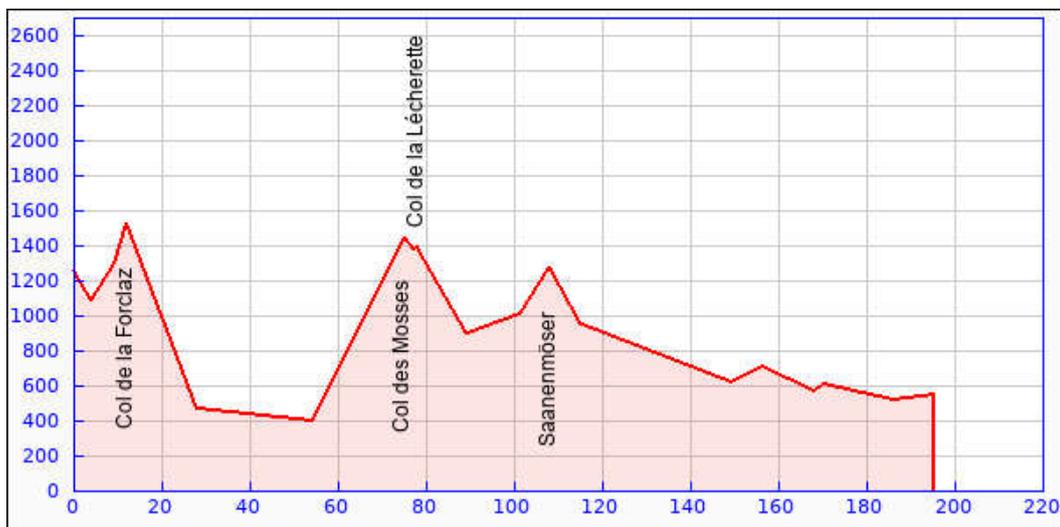
There were reports about yesterday's rainstorm in the newspapers and on the radio. Landslides near Chamonix had cut some roads. It is useless to tell that i was glad to have come through this, wet but safe!

For the fifth stage, the weather looked much better and it was a pleasure to be on the road again. After a gentle descent, i reached the Swiss border. Then the road went up to the [Forclaz](#) pass. From that side, it was an easy climb and the temperature was pleasant. The descent to Martigny was longer but fast because of only a few curves. Between Martigny and St-Maurice, the Rhône valley is known to be a windy place, but my luck was to find a calm day. On the other hand, i had bad luck with a tiny piece of metal on the road: flat tire just before St-Maurice! After repairing, i continued to Aigle. I was there, refilling my bottles, as i saw something like a rocket on two wheels passing by. Blue jersey. Festina. Oh, yes it was Laurent Dufaux. Too bad that i had just stopped, i could have tried to follow him for a while... even if i never used the kind of resources he did.

Anyway, i was feeling good and i started to climb to the Col des Mosses with a good pace. And i could keep a good pace up to the pass: this time the landscape and the weather were motivating, and i had to compensate for the shortened last stage. After riding down to Château-d'Oex, i had to go again

uphill for a while, till i reached [Saanenmöser](#), a small pass known (but from the other side) since my [1995 tour](#). It was early in the afternoon and this was already the last serious climb of the day. I knew, however, that i still had a long way to go. There was first the long descent along the Simmental valley, with some headwind which let often my speed drop below 30 km/h. Fortunately, there was not much traffic on that Friday. And then, all the way along the Stockental and Gürbetal. It was first a nice ride across the countryside, but then there was less country and some more traffic: i was getting closer to the city of Bern. I crossed the capital and arrived before five at Zollikofen. I was even too early at my brother's place, and had to wait for him to come back from his office. I took a shower and we went out for dinner, together with Wolfgang, a colleague and friend of mine (whose family just happened to be out of town).

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Vallorcine	0	1260	
Châtelard	4	1090	
Trient	9	1300	210
<a href="#">Col de la Forclaz</a>	12	1530	230
Martigny	28	470	
Aigle	54	400	
<a href="#">Col des Mosses</a>	75	1450	1050
Le Cuizon	77	1380	
<a href="#">Col de la Lécherette</a>	78	1390	10
Château-d'Oex	89	900	
Saanen	101	1010	110
<a href="#">Saanenmöser</a>	108	1280	270
Zweissimmen	115	950	
Reutigen	149	620	
Oberstocken	156	710	90
Lohnstorf	168	570	
Kirchenthurnen	170	610	40
Bern	186	520	
Zollikofen	195	550	30
<b>total</b>	<b>195</b>		<b>2040</b>



## Stage 6 (26 July 1996): Zollikofen - Gurnigel - Lignières

From Zollikofen to Lignières, it would have been a very short stage. Too short indeed. I took the opportunity for a detour to a pass still on my to-do list: Gurnigel. First, i had to go back and cross Bern again, but then i went a bit to the hills on the right (Längenberg) instead of taking the same road as the day before. Serious things began after Rüti: the [Gurnigel](#) pass in not very high, but it is steep! The average slope is 9%, but some parts are 12% or even a bit more. The road was good, across forests and alpine pastures, and the sun was shining. The Gurnigel lies between the cantons of Bern and Fribourg. On the Fribourg side, it is not so steep and the descent was nice. Then i continued from village to village across the countryside, a ride without any difficulty. I reached Le Landeron at about noon and began to climb to Lignières. On this sun-exposed slope, it was already hot and dry. As i finally arrived at my parent's, they were already having coffee, but they still had something left over for my lunch. As i was eating, i could start telling them the story of this tour 1996.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Zollikofen	0	550	
Bern	6	520	
Kehrsatz	11	570	50
Leuenberg	20	940	370
Riggisberg	24	760	
Plötsch	27	900	140
Rüti	29	820	
<b>Gurnigel</b>	39	1590	770
<b>Wasserscheide</b>	40	1580	
Zollhaus	55	870	
Saga (Plaffeien)	57	850	
Zumholz	61	870	20
Schiffenen	81	530	
Kleingurmels	82	560	30
Salvenach	87	570	10
Morat	90	450	
Bellechasse	96	430	
Ins / Anet	100	480	50
Le Landeron	110	430	
Lignières	115	800	370
Les Prés (Lignières)	120	920	120
<b>total</b>	<b>120</b>		<b>1930</b>

