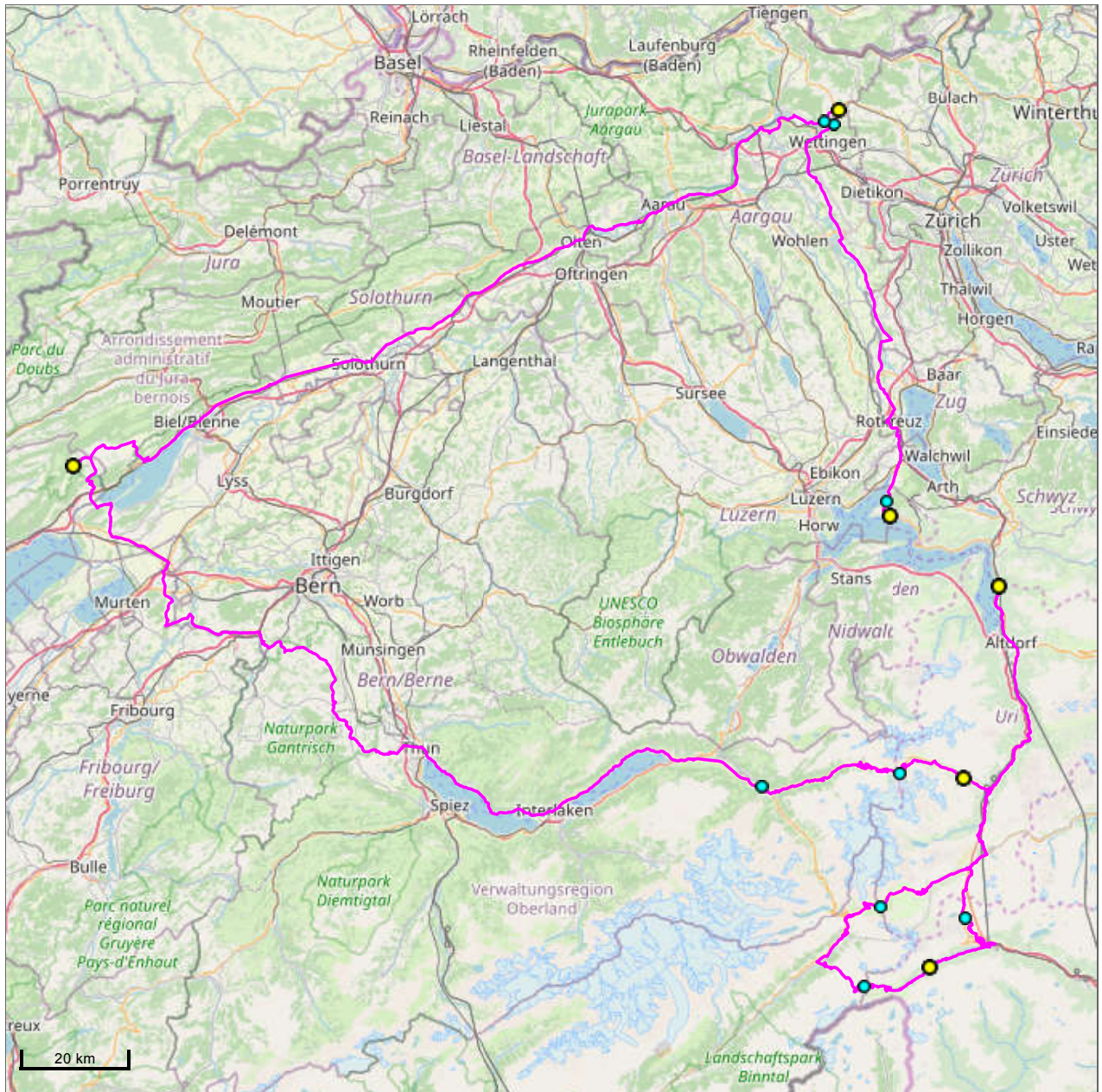
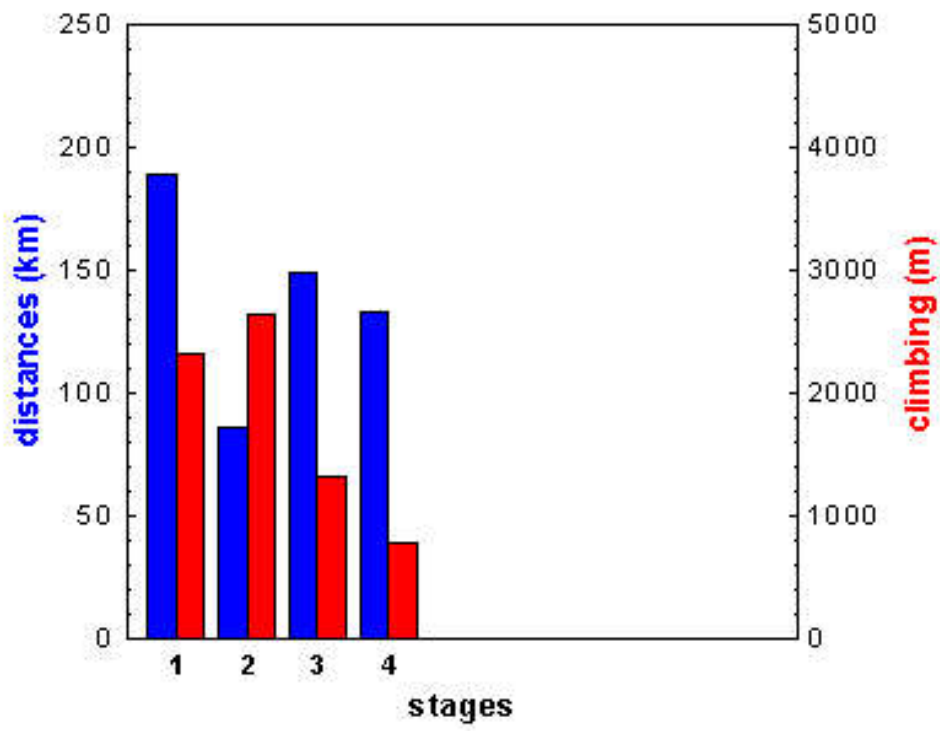


Bicycle tour 1992, 19 - 23 August

Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Lignières - Thun - Susten - Meien	190	2370
Meien - Furka - Nufenen - Ronco	85	2650
Ronco - Gottardo - Sisikon + Weggis - Ehrendingen	148	1360
Ehrendingen - Olten - Lignières	130	800
total	553	7180





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

Stage 1 (19 August 1992): Lignières - Thun - Susten - Meien

I started this 1992 tour from my parent's home. They have a farm near Lignières (canton of Neuchâtel). I hit the road early and began to ride down to Le Landeron, between the lakes of Neuchâtel and Biel/Bienne. The road was then quite flat to Laupen. I wanted to avoid the city of Bern, but this made me climb more than 400m before riding down again to Thun. At least the landscape was nice and the roads good for cycling.

The next part of the trip was along the lakes of Thun and then Brienz. There were no small roads anymore, only the main road with more traffic. But it was still a nice ride. Almost flat as it must be along a lake. I arrived at Brienz around noon and made a short stop on the shore of the lake. I refueled the machine with some bread and softdrink.

It was still flat to Meiringen. Between Innertkirchen and Meiringen, however, the river Aar goes through a narrow canyon. There is a path along this canyon, very good to walk, but nothing to ride a race bike. It is therefore necessary to go over a small hill to Innertkirchen, which is the town at the foot of both the Grimsel and Susten passes.

And there i was, attacking the Susten. The pass by itself is a respectable effort. But for me it turned to be just a bit too much, at the end of this long stage. I ran out of energy and the last third was very, very hard. The worst climb i've ever experienced. I hadn't forgotten to eat on the way and drank a lot (more than 10 liters for that day!), so what was the problem? One thing was probably that i was lacking long trainings and my muscles were thus not prepared to store enough glycogene. As a matter of fact, the missing glycogene was replaced by a bit too much of fat. This was a hard but good lesson.

There had been a big landslide two years before on the other side of the Susten. The road was still being rebuilt and the traffic was lead over another, narrow, steep and winding road. This required too much breaking and the rims of the bike got too warm. The glue of the rear sewn-up was melting and it began to turn. Then came the famous, nasty whistling. I didn't loose my calm, perhaps just because i was too tired. After replacing the sewn-up, i rode down to Meien, where i found a simple little hotel for the night.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Les Prés (Lignières)	0	920	
Le Landeron	10	430	
Ins	19	480	50
Kerzers	27	430	
Kriechenwil	40	540	110
Laupen	42	490	
Leueberg	67	940	450
Thun	89	550	
Brienz	130	570	20
Meiringen	144	600	30
Lammi	146	710	110
Innertkirchen	149	620	
Gadmen	161	1200	580
Sustenpass (Tunnel)	177	2220	1020
Meien	190	1270	
total	190		2370



Stage 2 (20 August 1992): Meien - Furka - Nufenen - Ronco

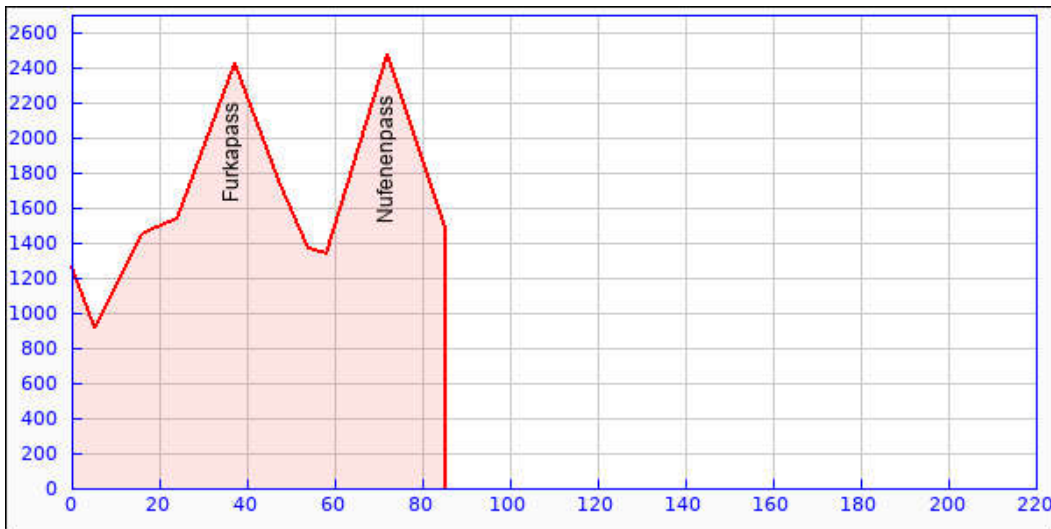
After the poor performance of the previous day up to the Susten, i feared a bit this second stage. The first part was easy, for sure: down the Wassen. But then came the Schöllen, which i climbed already the year before. But this time i turned right when i reached Andermatt, following the valley of Urseren west to Realp. From there, the road climbs again, up to the Furka pass. I was not riding very fast, trying not to spend all my energy in this climb: i should still need some for the second pass of the day.

I did not know anything about it and rode through Tiefenbach, the place where i would, years later, experience a serious [crash](#). But the way up is usually less dangerous and i reached the pass without problem. I made a short stop in the descent to look at the Rhone glacier. It can be seen from the Hotel Belvedere. The Furka pass has quite a high touristical traffic in the summer. Because it was already about noon, the place was really busy. It is always better to ride early over passes in order to avoid the worst traffic: tourists with cars or %!&\$#!+ motorhomes are usually lazy and don't hit the road so early.

The road to the Grimsel pass can also be seen when riding down to Gletsch, the small town where both ways join. Then the road still goes down to the more flat part of the Goms valley. My way was, however, leading up again, from Ulrichen up to the left, direction Nufenen pass (Novena from the other, italian speaking side). But first i refilled my bottles at a fountain. Again, i took my time to ride up. Something had happened that day on the Nufenen road. I don't know if he used too much of what he was transporting, but the driver of a small truck came out of the road and slid down on the steep meadow below. Part of the load was broken, but not all: bottles of wine.

I reached the top of this pass, the highest (with a paved road) entierly in Switzerland, and bought my trditional sticker as a souvenir. The descent was nice. I stopped on the way down and stayed at Ronco, in the Bedretto valley.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Meien	0	1270	
Wassen	5	920	
Andermatt	16	1450	530
Hospental	19	1490	40
Realp	24	1540	50
Furkapass	37	2430	890
Gletsch	47	1760	
Oberwald	54	1370	
Ulrichen	58	1340	
Nufenenpass	72	2480	1140
Ronco	85	1490	
total	85		2650



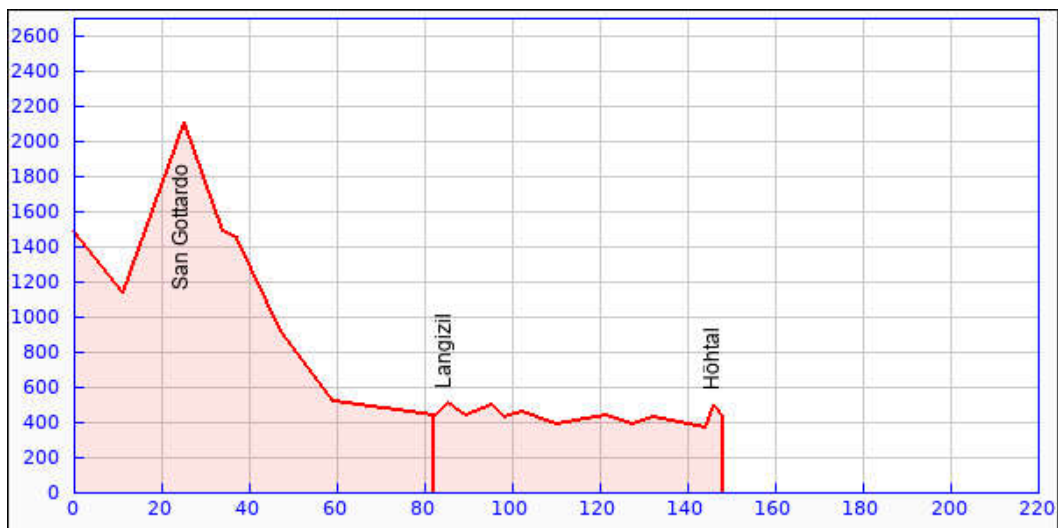
Stage 3 (21 August 1992): Ronco - Gottardo - Sisikon + Weggis - Ehrendingen

The first problem of the third day was to get some breakfast. The personnel of the hotel had obviously some difficulty to stand up... The Bedretto valley is no longer steep down from Ronco. Airolo was reached in short time. It is at the south end of the Gothard tunnels, which are one for road traffic and one for the railroad, both important passages across the Alps. At the same time, Airolo is at the foot of the pass. There are actually two roads up to the Passo san Gottardo: the old one, stone-paved, and the new one, which is a highway (forbidden for bikes) in its lower part. I chose to stay on the old road (known as La Tremola) even for the upper part, where it would be allowed to ride on the new road. The cobblestones were shahahahaking, but there was no traffic along the narrow curves of the old road. I would, however, not recommend it at all for riding down, at least not with a race bike.

After a long descent, I reached the plain again and then the Lake of 4 Cantons. That year, however, the Axenstrasse, the road along the lake, was closed. Some big rocks above the road were unstable and threatening to crash down. It was not possible for me to ride on the other side of the lake as the only way is a divided highway with a very long tunnel. From Sisikon I therefore took a boat which brought me to Weggis.

Back on the bike, I continued to the north. The rest of the stage was entirely in the lowlands. There were only some hills. The kind of hills which slowly drive energy out of your body, but without the reward of real mountains or passes. I finally reached Unterehrendingen (good exercise if you learn to speak German, isn't it...). Friends of mine, Lucia and Jean-Luc, live there. They have two children, a son (Raphaël) and a daughter (Nicole), and I'm the godfather of Raphaël. It was good to see them again. After refreshing myself, I listened to the news on the radio: there had been heavy thunderstorms in all the region around Lucerne. I had just been early enough. Lucky me this time!

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Ronco	0	1490	
Airolo	11	1140	
San Gottardo	25	2110	970
Hospental	34	1490	
Andermatt	37	1450	
Wassen	47	920	
Amsteg	59	520	
Sisikon	82	440	
>>> Weggis	82	430	
Langzill	85	510	80
Küssnacht am Rigi	89	440	
Meierskappel	95	500	60
Rotkreuz	98	430	
Hünenberg	102	460	30
Maschwanden	110	390	
Oberlunkhofen	121	440	50
Bremgarten	127	390	
Künten	132	430	40
Ennetbaden	144	370	
Höhtal	146	500	130
Unterehrendingen	148	440	
total	148		1360



Stage 4 (23 August 1992): Ehrendingen - Olten - Lignières

There is not much to tell about the last stage. It was basically just to ride back along the plain at the foot of the Jura. It was cool and i got some rain on the way. The last part of the stage was more interesting, both from the landscape (Lake of Biel/Bienne, Jura mountains) and from the last climb of this tour, from Douane (Twann in german) to the plateau of Diesse. This is known to those who read the novel "Der Richter und sein Henker" ("The judge and his executant") by Dürrematt. But the road is no longer the same as the one taken by the main character in the book: the road is nowadays on the other side of the stream.

I arrived back at Lignières at the end of this tour 1992. It had not been a long trip, but quite a hard one. In order to have more pleasure riding, i would have to be better trained the next time!

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Unterehrendingen	0	440	
Eichmatt	3	510	70
Turgi	9	340	
Windisch	14	370	30
Brugg	15	350	
Olten	47	400	50
Oberbuchsiten	60	460	60
Oensingen	64	460	
Attiswil	74	470	10
Solothurn	82	430	
Grenchen	93	450	20
Bienne	107	430	
Douanne	115	430	
Lamboing	120	820	390
Nods	125	890	70
Prés Ronds (Lignières)	127	820	
Les Prés (Lignières)	130	920	100
total	130		800

