

## Another fun day in the sun



This is how it starts; a civilized train ride to put us in position. No rental car (yet).

Not a whole lot of room for error! But this is what we came for, this is why we rode up some gnarly hill of mostly 9% grade (sometimes a bit more, sometimes a bit less) in 90 degree heat (up to 97 degrees a bit later in the ride). I'm not convinced this was the ultimate of the remaining "cliff roads" in this region, but it was pretty cool, especially watching the small birds playing in the air currents, going straight up, straight down, and sometimes just motionless, and then zooming right past you as if you weren't even there, on their way to their nests (which are built into the "ceiling" of the rock overhang).

At least on this one, Strava gave an "extreme" suffer score. And I was suffering. The heat doesn't make my breathing worse per se, but the effect on the need to constantly drink are extreme. The more you breathe, the more water you lose, so as I'm gasping for air I'm also losing water and it's hard to convince yourself to drink as much as you should when the water in your bottle is 90+ degrees. Nevertheless I'm getting lots of practice at it and getting better.



Kevin's smiling because he didn't realize this was truly a false summit; quite a bit more climbing still to come!

Kevin's rapidly recovering from his time off the bike and having to hang back a bit on the climbs for me, but I blame most of that on

having to be the pack mule, with a rack and bags on my bike so I can carry extra water, cokes, whatever. I do recall several times on the climb where I was wondering if I'd have to get off and walk for a bit (I didn't, don't worry). The Col de Romeyère was a bit tougher than expected, but probably not much different from the Col de la Machine we did either 2 or 4 years ago, I forget which.

One thing's for sure. As much as the heat gets to you on the climbs, that long flat-ish slog "home" at the end seems even worse. About 20 miles along the river back to Grenoble, the beginning of which Kevin was going super-strong but eventually it just starts wearing you down, mostly your butt, then you start to feel a little leg cramp coming on, which you nurse until it goes away.



It's pretty amazing, staring over the side of the cliff roads.

The main downside to these excursions into the Vercors region is they don't have little taverns/bars at the top of each climb, like you have in the Alps and Pyrenees. No 3 Euro cokes that you'd gladly pay double for. You have to pack in your own, or survive without. Doesn't seem very civilized!

Tomorrow's plans have been modified a bit by weather and distance; it's a 3 hour drive each way to where the Tour de France will be (Pra Loup) and the forecast is for pretty gnarly thunderstorms. Not sure that makes sense, so we'll do something semi-local, semi-epic, but absolutely positively whatever we do, it will have a bar or tavern at the top of the climb!