

Recovery day ride



Several questions come to mind. #1:- What is it? Is it the full-sized Druid monolith that Spinal Tap was looking to recreate? #2:- Why the 2 meter, 10cm height restriction to come near it? Today the 'Tour is having one of their toughest stages with a number of Category 1 (and over) climbs through Spain and finishing in Andorre. Given that it would take 4 or 5 hours driving to get there (no rail access), we skipped viewing this stage. Probably not a bad thing, given two back-to-back pretty tough days, although only yesterday's climb up the Tourmalet felt at all "epic."



This is a "col"? About 500 feet of climbing? So today became our rest & recovery & laundry day. I mapped out a pretty easy 22 mile ride with just a few short climbs, here in the vicinity of Lourdes. It worked out quite nicely, giving our legs a chance to spin themselves back into shape and let our minds know that not every ride has to be brutal. Nice views, decent roads, not too many cars. Plus, that odd-looking thing at the top of the page! The exact coordinates are 43.081321, -0.072651. Unfortunately, google maps hasn't yet done a street view for this road. This ride also had the advantage of not traveling on any of the bike path leading out of town... don't get me wrong, it's a very nice bike path, but if you return to Lourdes on it, you're fighting a pretty good headwind.

Meantime, back at the race... pretty much nothing happening. Large break with nobody of consequence (in terms of taking the lead for the race) and, among the contenders, nearly 10 minutes back with 25 miles to go... everyone's just watching each other. Back in the day, when performance-enhancing drugs reigned supreme and gave riders super-powers, we likely would have seen quite a few attacks by now. In a nutshell, drugs like EPO and various steroids helped keep you going, day after day after day. Without them, you have to very carefully watch what you do, trying not to go too far into the red because that could leave you totally shelled the next day. Power meters also contribute to boring races, because you now know exactly how much energy you're expending, and can keep track of what the total ride has "cost" you so far. More than anything power meters have taught cyclists that explosive efforts on a climb are inefficient and allow others to gradually claw their way back up.

In the good-news department, I got rid of nearly all of the annoying noises coming from my bike yesterday, and Kevin's knee is giving him no issues at all. And found a new bakery at the end of today's ride; fantastic baguettes (sandwiches) for 3.5 euro apiece. Life is good! --Mike--