

No cafe at the top, 4 miles on the freeway, but great ride anyway!



It's tough, after visiting Lourdes as frequently as I have, to find new roads to ride, new mountains to climb. Actually it's not THAT hard; you just have to talk yourself into believing you're ready to take on another monster after the last one felt like it wanted to kill you. In general, I try not to schedule back-to-back killer rides on days we're not seeing the Tour de France (like today, which is a rest day for the racers), and I also try not to have a killer ride right before we have to pack for the next stop. So yes, it's not quite as simple as saying "Let's do Luz Ardiden, since we haven't done that one before!"

Long way of saying that, sometimes, the debate over quality & quantity can be a bit complicated. I really didn't want to subject Kevin to Luz Ardiden, one of the few marquee climbs in the area I haven't yet ridden. Yet I did want something "real." So, off to Google and Strava, looking for what others have said and done. Something that would be a lot easier if the hotel's wifi was more than barely functional. Next time I need a reliable data connection for my laptop, I'm going to get a gsm card just for the laptop.



A few goats looking on as Kevin rides past.

So where did we ride? I found this interesting local "col" (French for mountain) named Col des Borderes. Not too far away (the climb starts about 10 miles from Lourdes), some challenging but not impossible grades, not too much traffic, and beautiful scenery. What's not to like? Only the lack of a cafe at the top!

If you do this climb, I strongly recommend it in the direction we rode (clockwise). You get a great, variable-pitch, twisty & beautiful ride up, with a fast descent that has few views, not too many turns, and long unbroken stretches of steady steep grades. Even with multiple bakery stops this ride takes under 4 hours.



Perhaps we should write a book, "The Bakeries of France." We've visited quite a few.

Just be careful after descending the mountain... because you can easily screw up and find yourself on the main freeway, stuck there for 4 miles or so. It doesn't seem like you're getting onto a freeway because you enter it via a roundabout, and who would place a roundabout on a freeway? Kevin thought there might be a better way out of town but stayed quiet, perhaps wanting to see how badly I would end up navigating us and in fact did later point out the irony of my claim that he has poor navigational skills. But hey, it had a decent shoulder and only one out of four cars honked at us. OK, not really, it was more like one or two a minute... as if I wanted to be on the freeway! Safety was never an issue, just pleasantness (or lack thereof). I'm going to check and see if there's a Strava segment for it; we passed a group of cyclists with a flat tire, so I suspect quite a few have found there way onto it.