

First "real" day at the TdF, and it was a big one



Did I forget to tell Larry, who's with me on this trip to the Tour de France, that the Galibier was, well, big? No, didn't think so. But I don't think it really set in until he got his chance to sink his teeth into it this morning. It's a beast!

The original plan was to take a ridiculously-early-morning train from Grenoble to a station near the base of the Galibier, but that would have required a 5:45am alarm. Somehow that just didn't seem reasonable. So I worked things around a bit and figured we could, in fact, drive there if we parked a few miles from the base of the climb, and woke up at the much-more-reasonable hour of 7am.

This should have worked out fine, giving us enough time to make it to the top before the roads were shut down, but Larry's from Houston, and they don't have mountains in Houston (especially so after they took down all the tall oil derricks you see in old movies and pictures). Of course, a hill is nothing but a flat road tilted up on its side, right? But riding over 20 miles on a road tilted on its side can beat down just about anyone, so we didn't get up there quite as fast as planned. Not a huge deal though; we found a nice spot about 4k from the top. What I didn't expect was Larry suggesting we finish the climb after the last of the race had gone through. Kind of dumb on my part; if I were him, and I'd traveled all this way to France to ride my bike, and I'm just a few miles from the top of one of the iconic climbs in the world, wouldn't I want to make it to the top? Well duh!

4 kilometers doesn't sound like much. Less than 3 miles. But it's a pretty tough 3 miles, and at 8000ft+, the thin air has an effect too. But it felt good being up there, first time for him, second for me (kinda 3rd but not quite; first time was the 103 miles Glandon/Galibier loop I did with Kevin in 2011, second time was a few years later, but stopping about 300 meters shy of the top because they wouldn't let us further up, and besides, that was from the easy side while the 1st and 3rd times were from the much-nastier northern approach).

More on this day soon, but have a 6:30 alarm tomorrow morning for the Izoard stage, which, logistically, is a bear. Not even sure we'll be let up the hill at all. Hope so! --MikeJ