

A great ride backward is even better! Gorges du Nan revisited



Going back in time, only in reverse. Guess that makes sense if you go back in time, right?

Exactly two years ago today, Kevin and I rode part of this ride in the opposite direction, descending through the Gorges du Nan and thinking maybe this would be a better ride in the opposite direction. Today Larry and I proved that right. Or maybe wrong. Not sure. It was a much shorter version of what Kevin and I did in 2015, when we took the train to the beginning point and rode back to Grenoble afterward; [that ride](#) was 54 miles with about 4000ft of climbing. Today's ride was a much shorter version, just 23 miles (we drove to the start/finish and drove back afterward) and 3400ft of climbing. Partly shorter because rain was threatening to move in this afternoon, and partly because Larry, well, let's just say he doesn't have many opportunities to climb much in Texas!



That's Larry on the ground, at the top of the main climb. He's not exactly dead, nor could he claim to be alive at this point.

Whether the ride is better in this direction or the other is up for debate; clearly the Gorges du Nan section, with its cliff road, is the payoff, and descending it puts it at the end of the ride, vs the beginning if you climb. The best case for climbing it is that you have more time to experience the insanely-built road than if you descend, and we climbed at a speed that allowed a lot of opportunity for viewing the gorge. :-)

We started the ride in Cognin les Gorges, giving about, what, 300 meters or so before you hit the base of the hill? And when I say hill, I mean it in the meanest-possible way because this is a relentless uphill journey without any descents or even flat spots on the way up. Over 3000ft up, 3000ft down. Consider this a "compact" ride. It goes UP for about 9 miles, and it goes DOWN for about 9 miles. We did find a little village with water about 1/2 way up the climb, which was a good thing because Larry goes through water very fast. Fortunately, we were climbing at a rate where water wasn't an issue for me, despite the fact that I'm drinking about twice what I used to do to my meds.

The views on the way up are stunning, the road surface pretty good, and the cars... well, maybe we saw 5 or 6 the entire time we were on the mountain? France is pretty amazing that way, once you get off the main roads and onto the fun stuff.

The descent doesn't favor high speed, as it's got a lot of corners with decreasing radii and quite a few that are even banked the

opposite of how they should be, but after that long climb, it's a pleasant relief for most. Me? Yeah, I would have liked to have climbed more, but I'm kinda nuts that way.



Post-ride Ice Cream

At the end of the ride Larry and I stopped at the same place Kevin and I had lunch before riding back to Grenoble. Two beers, a panini and ice cream later, Larry was fully revived. I chose Orangina over beer, and a Salami sandwich (but did go for ice cream too). Our last ride in France, so it made sense to celebrate a bit.

Tomorrow morning we take a train at an entirely-reasonable hour (9:15am) to Marseille for the Tour de France time trial, arriving back around 9pm. Then pack up and leave the next morning for Paris, to see the finale, and head home on Monday. I love being in France, and it's great the Mike F, Becky and Kevin can take care of things in our Redwood City store while I'm gone, but it's my business to get people to enjoy cycling like I do, and that's best done in person, in a bike shop. That's the point to Chain Reaction.
--MikeJ