

## At least today's train failure A: Wasn't our fault and B: Didn't cost us a \$500 taxi ride



The full series of merging-roads signs! We got 'em!

No bike riding today; we took the train from Grenoble to Orange, an early-in-the-stage intercept in a boring location and too early for any significant action other than the day's break. And it was HOT. Really hot. Like 101 on the weather app, but said felt like 113. Well, to be truthful, I'm not even sure I knew what 113 felt like before today. My phone knew what to do though; it put up a screen that said it wasn't putting up with any such nonsense and shut down. After 20 minutes in the shade it was fine, while Kevin and I? But we'd found a small store and stocked up on cold bottled water and orangina, along with some excellent sandwiches (incredible cheese!!!).



How hot is too hot? It's something cooler than this, for sure!

No great photos from the race (nothing to see, move along) but at least got the camera gear out and running for the first time. Then walked back to the train station, waited for about an hour in the heat, but hey, we did score THREE route signs! In fact, a series, showing a merge at 200 meters, 100 meters and 0! That, I thought, was pretty cool. Amazing that nobody seemed to pay them any attention.

The first train. Well, let's just say we wish it had been a convertible. No air conditioning, just some open windows. Oh. My. But at least it was on time, or very close to. But our transfer point in Valence Ville is where everything went wrong.



Looking forward you can see a dim understanding become reality... this train was going nowhere.

Our train was supposed to leave at 4:15. It had a track number on the electronic display. We waited at that track. And... at some point, it disappeared from the display without warning because at 4:24pm, still no train, I went to look at the board and it had vanished. What? Kevin didn't know how to ask a conductor what happened to the train, even though he speaks pretty good French, so somehow such questions fall to me? Whatever, I'm not proud, I string a few words together, find out the they speaks passable English, and he tells us we need to take the train that says it's going to Geneva. OK, at this point I'm not even recalling why the "Geneva" train didn't work out, but another conductor told me, after we went over to the "Geneva" train, that the train we needed was going to be back on the track we came from.

So we went back to that track, and a train arrived. And the conductor said yes, Grenoble. And we got on it. And we waited. And after about 15 minutes there was an announcement in dreadful Jack-In-The-Box French that I couldn't make out other than the words "power system", but everyone who was used to ordering from a French version of Jack-In-The-Box was getting up and leaving the train. Outside, we were directed back over to track A (this train had been on C), and boarded a nicer-looking train. Until...

Until about 5 minutes later an announcement was made that this was not the correct train, please go back and board the train we just got off of on Track C. I mean, seriously? But that's what we did, and after sitting on THAT train for another 15 minutes... it actually left the station. And eventually we ended up in Grenoble, not too much the worse for wear because, I mean, who can't get enough time outside and in hot trains during a French heatwave?

Tomorrow morning we rent a car and, if the revised plan works out, we drive to Bourg d'Oison, at the base of Alpe d'Huez, and ride up to the Col du Lauteret and watch the Tour come up over the backside of the Galibier. Complicating matters is that it's supposed to be during a thunderstorm. the original plan involved riding up the Galibier from the far side, but that would have required a two-hour drive each way, and not knowing just what the weather is going to be like, I felt it better to be closer to "home" and stay on "our" side of the Galibier.

More tomorrow!