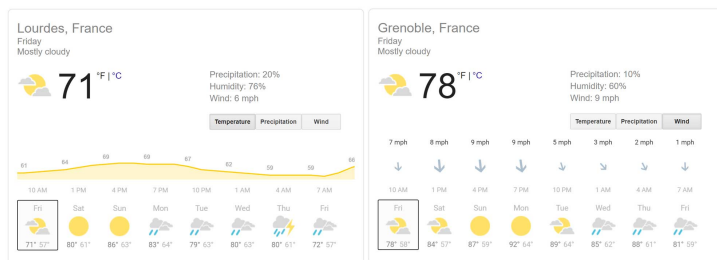


I wish I knew



Weather right now in Lourdes and Grenoble, France, the bases for covering the Pyrenees & Alps, respectively. It is a very, very odd thing. I really don't have a good idea how fast I am on the climbs right now. It's been weeks since I've ridden with anyone where I could "air it out" and really try to kill myself up Kings. The only thing I do know is that it's no longer difficult to get under 30, and a 28-something could be the regular routine. If I was able to get more miles in on Sundays and really push myself, I'm guessing I'd be back in the mid-27s again. Maybe. Or maybe it's just wishful thinking. I just don't know.

I do know that I'm not supposed to be here. I'm in the wrong parallel universe at the moment. The universe I'm supposed to be in is in France. But this year, everything's upside-down. Even if I was in France, even if the "Tour" was running right now, they put together a screwy course that has the last week in the Alps again, just like last year. Right now, Kevin and I should have arrived in either Paris (CDG) about an hour ago, or Geneva (GVA) about an hour or two from now. If we were heading to the Pyrenees, it would be Paris, where we'd have 4 hours to make the transfer to Gare Montparnasse. Best option is the Air France bus, which takes you from outside the terminal at CDG straight to the Gare Montparnasse train station. The train leaves at 12:47, arriving Lourdes at 5:39. This is **not** the best example of high-speed rail in France; once you get past Bordeaux, it's pretty ancient & slow track. Last year, before the course was announced, that's what we expected to do.

But they did the screwy thing with the course that I mentioned, so instead, we'd be heading back to the Alps again. Probably flying into Geneva and taking a short train from the airport to the main Geneva train station, then a two hour not-terribly-fast train to Grenoble.

Whether Lourdes or Grenoble we have apartments we stay in within an extremely short walk from the train station. Less than 100 meters in Lourdes, maybe 300 meters in Grenoble.

In my mind, right now, I'm navigating the transfer from the airport to the train. Seriously, this is the first time I've been here in Redwood City, on the 3rd Thursday of July, in 10 years. No, 12 I think. I think 2008 was the last "Tour" I missed. To Grenoble, since that's where the final week of climbing is this year. Kevin and I will arrive, with our two Bike Fridays each in their own suitcase, two other suitcases with clothes & whatever is needed for 12 days away from home, plus a backpack each, one with camera gear, the other laptops & such. It's a bit of a struggle getting it all loaded up into the train, but not too bad; we're pretty used to it by now. But obviously, the fewer connections, the better.

We'll arrive at our apartment in Grenoble about 5:30pm, same time we would have arrive in Lourdes had that been our destination. Check in, get a shower, then head out to eat. Stay up until 11pm or so France time, making it a very, very, VERY long travel day, but with the benefit that you sleep straight through and actually feel kind of normal waking up on the other side of the world at 8am "their" time, which is 11pm back home. That's a lot of time difference!

But, that's not where I am. And even if the "Tour" hadn't been rescheduled to September, I still wouldn't be there, because it's still way too busy at the shop. Kevin and I do have plans & tickets to go in September, but getting the shop moved might keep that from happening (although it's possible that we might want to just close the shop for 12 days then anyway, just to give everyone a rest). And it's possible that Covid-19 will still be going strong enough in California that Europe won't let us in. It's looking pretty doubtful at the moment, which is exactly the reason I ought to try and do everything I can to make it happen. I wish it was Lourdes we'd be heading back to, but I'll settle for Grenoble and the screwy course they've laid out this year.