

Heading back to Paris for the finale



One last view of Lourdes through the train's window



Kevin with his last not-so-great coffee in Lourdes

It's with some sadness that we leave Lourdes; we were shorted three days of solid good rides in the mountains, due to the combination of missed connections trying to get here, followed by me breaking a couple of ribs at the end of our first day of intercepting the 'Tour. Add to that the missing luggage and yes, there were a few minor glitches that kept us from our full agenda of activity!

But overall? It's been a successful trip, with some really strong high points, particularly for Kevin. He "got the shot(s)" on his big day on Luz Ardiden. He got to do a big ride all on his own (when I was not able to climb due



Fortress Kevin

to the broken ribs). He got more great shots at the Time Trial and, while the "Village" pass really wasn't worth the effort (no interaction with the riders anymore, due to Covid 19), we still got a really good spot for photos.

Today is a combined travel/event day-

- Started the day at 6:50am (my alarm was set for 7 but like I'm going to try and get 10 minutes more sleep vs an extra 10 minutes to make sure everything's in order?)
- Shower, then wake Kevin up at 7:05am
- Do a bit of final clean up, haul most of the luggage downstairs (did I mention we were on the 3rd floor?)



Leaving Lourdes

Head out for breakfast (at our favorite patisserie/cafe in Lourdes, just two blocks away!)

- Ask the inn keeper if she could call a taxi for us (with four big pieces of luggage, the idea of me hauling two of them, one using my left arm which is attached to my left side which is where the broken ribs are... uphill to the train station, which normally would be an easy 15 minute walk... that just didn't fly)
- Leave at 8:30am in the taxi for the short drive to the train station. Possibly best 10 euros spent of the trip!
- Arrive train station 8:40am, plenty of time, too much time maybe, before 9:19am departure. But time to get watered-down espresso from the Relay store, figure out which end of the train we'll be, and build a luggage fortress around Kevin to keep the young women away.



Kevin in "Travel Mode"

Board train for long (4 hour+) trip on "high speed" TGV that, for the first two hours, is anything but high-speed as it navigates the twisty old tracks between Lourdes and Bordeaux. A train that's "full" but pretty empty until he reach Bordeaux, where it quickly fills to 100%. Good thing we got on, with our four big suitcases, while there was still room to stash them!

- Update the almost-daily diary while on the train, because people think maybe my broken ribs have gotten the best of me. Which, in a way, they have. If I can't climb mountains well, what else am I good for?



Why you want to avoid "club 4" seating

But somehow I've kept my spirits up, kept finding ways to work around the odd stuff that's been thrown at us this year. And very, very thankful that my broken ribs aren't as bad as most experience.

Right now it's 1:12pm and we're about 25 minutes out of Bordeaux, finally on high speed track, and arriving in Paris at 2:16pm, 5 minutes behind schedule. The Montparnasse station is on the same (very long) block as our hotel in Paris, so maybe a 10 minute walk. Uphill, of course! We'll quickly settle in, and then



Well gee whiz! But the "share" button doesn't work. :-(

head out to see the Tour de France finish on the Champs Elysees. We have no idea what that will be like this year; in the mountains, I'd say crowds were only about 2/3rds of normal. And for the past 4 or 5 years, we've been spoiled by using Trek Travel services, which has a viewing party on a closed-to-the-public part of the course, where you can be literally inches away from the riders, with nobody obstructing your view. But today we'll be with the masses, fighting for position and hopefully not wondering why we're just not watching it from the hotel on TV.

More soon! --Mike--

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