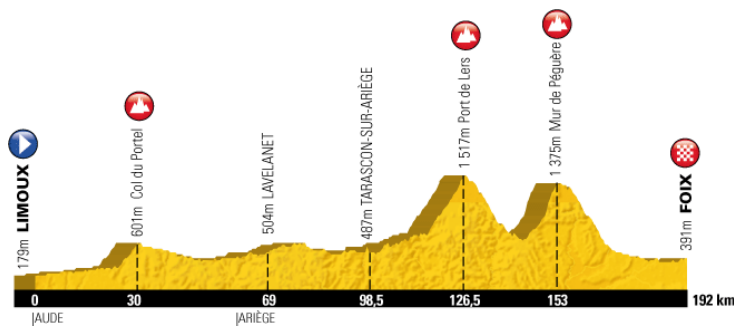


TdF Stage 14, Sunday July 15th Limoux-Foix

Today we're going to take you through the planning involved with seeing a stage of the Tour de France. We're going to assume you're on your own, you don't have a rental car, but you do have a bike. Pretty much my typical trip to the Tour de France the past 6 or 7 years!

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This is the first stage Kevin and I will see in France. This isn't yet an accurate rendition of the route, since it comes up 30k short of what's listed for the length, but good enough to cover all the various mountains along the way, and good enough to plan the day. Below is the profile for the stage. If I spend a bit more time with the distances shown between each point, I can likely figure out the actual route a bit better.



Google maps driving directions for getting from Lourdes to the Mur de Peguère, viewing point for Stage 14. Available train stations are the small dark circles.

The plan is to take the train from Lourdes to a station that we can ride to the race course from, thus avoiding having to rent a car. This particular stage is the one furthest from our hotel in Lourdes, making it the most-challenging to access.

Our options include taking the train from Lourdes to Boussons (the second circle from the right) and riding through Saint Giron and the backside of the mountains the Tour will be climbing, or taking the train all the way to Toulouse and then another train south to Foix, where we can climb the actual roads the Tour will be heading up. It's a longer ride from Boussons, but a much-earlier train departure if we want to get to Foix. 6:23am vs 10:26am. The 10:26am departure gets us to Boussons at 11:46am, plenty of time to ride the 45 miles needed to intersect the TdF route, entirely on roads not ridden by the race. The 6:23am train to Foix (the furthers-right dot on the map) arrives in Foix at 10:03am, plenty of time for the 15 mile ride up the mountain.

Using www.BikeRouteToaster.com, I am able to check the profile of "unknown" roads and see what we would face on our rides from the relevant train station to the race itself. A big help when riding an area you haven't been to before.

[View Larger Map](#) I'm favoring the early departure, since that would allow us to ride different roads on the way back, including the very interesting-looking D33 which looks like a paved cowpath that gradually descends for 20 miles or so. If you want to get an idea

of just how cool D33 looks, [check this link](#).

So for now I'm thinking the early-morning departure, painful as it is, makes the most sense. Take the train from Lourdes to Toulouse, transfer at Toulouse and head to Foix, get some food and head up the hill to see the race come through (we need to be in position 3 hours ahead of the race, so a 10am arrival is not as early as it seems, figuring that the race is going to come through around 3:30-4pm and it might take 2 hours or so to ride the 15 miles up the hill).