

Kevin doesn't think Ventoux's easy anymore



And this is the "easy" part of the climb!



Can't explain this one. A guy walking up Ventoux wearing a big box with a rider's name on it.

Our first day intercepting the Tour de France, and I'd love to say it was all fun & easy, but Ventoux is one tough climb and this time, it got the better of Kevin. Probably because it was hot, 90+ degrees for the first part, and wickedly steep. I brought along enough water (Cytomax) and made sure Kevin was drinking, and planned ahead of time to stop for a cold soda anytime Kevin wanted one. But still, that 7 mile section that averages over 9% can get to you, and it certainly did today.



Approaching Chalet Reynard, the end of the really-nasty part of the climb!

Still, it was a successful and, in the end, fun day, even though the Dutch weren't out in force (they've likely been staying on Alpe d'Huez waiting for Thursday's big day there). Lots of people in nutty outfits, the usual cast of incredibly-strong guys pulling kids in trailers up the hill, the people yelling encouragement to you.

In a flip-flop from last year, it was Kevin that requested walking up part of the climb, about a quarter mile or so, when one of his legs was bothering him. Did I protest? No way. You do whatever it takes to get to the top! And he did recover fairly well after that.



Chris Froome, today's stage winner and likely winner overall, looking both haggard and out-of-focus. Artistic license on my part? Nope. Just screwed up. Far fewer issues with Gendarmes closing off the roads or telling us we couldn't ride too! I had some concerns that we might get shut down at Chalet Reynard like they tried to do to us last time (we had to sneak around a barrier) but I figured if we got there by noon we'd make it through, and we arrived at 11:58am. Pretty good timing!

What we should not have done was to park ourselves at the highest part of the hill we could get to, 550 meters from the top. It wasn't a great spot for photos, being in the middle of a long straight section, but it did have the advantage of a sandwich and coke seller 100 meters away. Next time, we'll ride up as far as we can, and then head back down the hill a couple of kilometers to a good spot for photos, which means on a corner, not a straight section.

Tomorrow we pack up and leave Avignon for Grenoble, where we'll be spending 6 nights and see the final Time Trial and all the Alps stages. Lots of big climbs still ahead, but nothing quite like Ventoux, and in fact the only climb I've ever found quite like Ventoux is Sonora Pass. Which I need to ride again, but seem to be in no rush to do so. :-)