

It's all about July 15th

Time is running out; every ride counts in the next four weeks. Kevin and I will be heading to France on July 12th, arriving July 13th, and seeing our first stage on the Grand Colombier on the 14th, Bastille Day. The Grand Colombier is a beast of a climb, but we've done it before, and it's not a bad ride from Annecy, where we'll be based all but one of the days we're in France.

It's the next day that, as they say, looms large. It's also the start of a series of rides on terrain we've never ridden before, new mountains, including, on the 14th, the Col Joux Plane, made famous some years back as the place Lance bonked and nearly lost the 'Tour. Never mind the wins were all taken away later.

The tough part about the Joux Plane is that it's way out there in the sticks, 30 kilometers from the Cluses train station, our connection back to Annecy. Last train out of Cluses is 7:10pm; the race is expected to pass by the Col Joux Plane at about 5:30pm. The race leaders, that is. The remnants of the pack will pass through during the next 40 minutes or so, which means... we might start our trip back to the station around 6:10pm. One hour to travel about 22 miles, almost entirely downhill (about 350ft climbing total on the return). So we really have to plan on it taking a miracle to make it, but need to be prepared for riding the entire way back to Annecy.

It actually doesn't look all that bad, a bit less than 60 miles, and when you consider it doesn't get dark until about 10pm, it's easily doable. But what does the next day look like?