

MILLE DU SUD EDITION 2024 That of the red flame?

Sunday August 31, 2024

Usual rail connection to the ARCS DRAGUIGNAN station then remounting the bike session before reaching the base camp at COTIGNAC. Common connection with Doris HERMANNNS via a small road which without extending allows you to escape traffic for a while. Our German friends are still numerous. This edition includes all or part of those from 2020 or even 2013. A return to the future in a way!

Monday September 1, 2024 Base camp

Information will soon be circulating among us: Sophie MATTER may no longer organize the Mille du Sud after this fifteenth edition. As a symbol, the enamels given as "goodies" represent the red flame, symbol of the last kilometer of cycling races! Well, it seems that the new route since we will go up to JURA is more demanding due not to Alpine peaks to cross but rather a succession of medium altitude passes which will face us during the loop around GRENOBLE LE BOURGET DU LAC and ANNECY.



A moment of exchange and replenishment of reserves at base camp.

The day goes by quietly like the previous departure days. The usual meeting place on the terrace of a café on the main street of COTIGNAC fills up at the end of the morning. Pascal BRIDE and Régis KRUST join the troupe and decide to eat there. The beer tour has begun. For our part, we go back to base camp overloaded with cans of beer, spaghetti, tomato sauce, grated cheese, yogurt and fruit. Sharing a communal meal under the refectory porch where everyone has brought something either in their vehicle or after purchasing it at the supermarket in the village center. The organization's refrigerator is well stocked: enough to drink for the Germans and something to eat for breakfast on Tuesday morning. Sophie's restaurateur friends came at

the end of the afternoon to prepare something to leave on a full stomach for those leaving in the evening. Place an order then everyone comes to pick up their plate when their first name is called.

Priority is therefore given to fans of the 8 p.m. departure. Matthias pitches his tent, Philippe TESSIER is also participating this year. At the end of the afternoon, David SACHS arrives on a beautiful intense blue bike. Just a slight commotion and the first group leaves the base camp. The weather forecasts suggest that forgetting rain jackets and other protections - unfortunately often quickly illusory - are essential.

The departure for the "nights" is approaching. This year, just over thirty participants in total, including two women. About half set off for their first night of riding. The other half continue their discussions most often in German. The most watchful ones only return to the dormitory at almost midnight. I ask David SACHS how to translate chickpeas into English. It was ultimately the Italian participant who provided it to me! I therefore advise David to call on him for his next translation difficulties!



DENIS SCALA is ready to fight!



Pascal BRIDE and the two brothers

Tuesday September 3, 2024 COTIGNAC SERRES

Up at 4 a.m. for a departure at 5, Olivier, another morning person, sets off around 4:15 a.m. He plans to reach the CARRI pass in the evening. The 7 o'clock starters overtake us in duo or trio around FORCALQUIER where we made our refueling stop after a first coffee croissant at GREOUX LES BAINS. The traffic before reaching MANOSQUE is dense, thanks to the cycle path for saving us from automobile fumes. Overlooking MANOSQUE so dear to GIONO, Matthias GANSMMANN surprises me.



Personal message! I can't I'am biking



Mathias GANNSMANN



Another German pair after FORCALQUIER

All in my thoughts in memory of the “Gionesque” reading, I had not paid attention to his approach. During the first change of track in ST ETIENNE DES ORGUES, Walter catches up with us, so we must now be the backs of this edition. The LURE station appears before our eyes, the climb will mainly be experienced under the shade. A German participant joins us and heads to the top. Its stop shortly before the summit allows us to discover quite a landscape that the 8 p.m. departures will probably not have been able to appreciate like us.



Superb viewpoint before the LURE signal



Another memory from a previous visit



LURE observation station

A group of cyclos clutters the summit panel that we must display to attest to our passage. Then begins the first big descent to SISTERON.

Opportunity for a new refueling stop. Ah, how interesting these little convenience stores are during these hikes! Once the main road is left on our right, a small series of bumps breaks the monotony of a beautiful ribbon. We thus avoid LARRAGNE, a place of passage for diagonalists during attempts between DUNKERQUE and MENTON. We will reach SERRES just before the rain. The brasserie very close to the hotel will not leave me with a lasting memory, the gorgonzola pasta is difficult to go down, an omelette with fries and salad restores the nutritional balance. Rain is forecast for our departure tomorrow morning, which promises for the crossing of the Vercors. Rinsing the shorts and using a heater.

Wednesday September 4, 2024 SERRES VOREPPE

Up at 4 a.m., breakfast in the room prepared the day before by the owner - a cyclist no less - who acquired a gravel bike the day before. No rain to begin the climb to the Col de CARABES. I reinflate my rear tire in SIGOTTIER. A very slow puncture to take into account for the descents to come. DIE allows a refueling stop before taking the time to eat a sandwich and coffee on the terrace of the busy bakery at the start of the morning (another place already visited but solo). Doris immortalizes a graffiti inspired by those of BANKSY (?).



Thanks to Doris HERMANNNS for her insight!

The Col du ROUSSET is in sight. CHAMALOC and its watering trough take me back 10 years. This is where I had to stop, unable to keep my eyes open during the descent of ROUSSET in 2013. Completing a previous route in the opposite direction is just as pleasant. The view at the very beginning of the descent towards SAINTJEAN EN ROYANS is sublime.



Another superb view



Doris HERMANNNS



Engineering workers have accomplished construction miracles by digging such tunnels.



Before diving into SAINT JEAN EN ROYANS

The CARRI pass is an opportunity to meet two hikers and their pack donkeys.



Another travel way of life

Stop at the bakery a little away from the trail in PONT EN ROYANS. Advantage of having already taken the Mille du Sud routes. I met Sophie there that year. I take advantage of this for a re-inflating session. The Col du MONT NOIR looms. 5:45 p.m. is indicated in the route book. Beautiful descent until we take the cycle path which takes us to VOREPPE between rivers and motorway. We see the recent collapse of the cliff making the main road on the other side impassable. Quite a few “commuters” encountered on this section. A semi-trailer truck is having difficulty extricating itself from a slight, very muddy climb. There is no restaurant in this industrial zone, we will take out what we have left from the bag and the drinks distributor (soup, sodas and beers) will make the rest of our dinner.

Thursday September 5, 2024 VOREPPE VIVIERS DU LAC

Habits die hard: get up 4 hours. A little gardening for this departure in SAINT AGREVE. A first stop to make us feel that the dish is finished for the day. QUAIX EN CHARTREUSE and already 500 m of positive D on the GPS screen. The finale of the Col de PORTE takes place in the rain, which promises to be good for the descent. Soaked in sweat, my clothes are no longer of much help to me. So I hold the top of the collar of my rain jacket between my teeth to protect my throat a little. Soon I'm drooling like a baby with a pacifier. SAINT PIERRE DE CHARTREUSE welcomes us with a beautiful shower. First stop in a hotel which turns out to be unsuccessful, continuation to the center of the village.

The bakery, open to all winds, will still be a valuable shelter. I take the liberty of asking the baker for a towel to dry me off a little, once I have taken off my layers which will not warm me during this stop. Stop at the municipal toilets then departure in the persistent downpour. In every meteorological circumstance of this type, it is not desirable to descend. This time it is the CUCHERON which will be the scene of the situation. Rear tire re-inflating session at the summit both to warm up (!) and to ensure a descent without slipping. The colder I am on the descent, the less it drags on. Is this the best option? I'm glad I took the trouble to put in new brake pads. The Col du GRANIER is the next hammam session of the day. David SACHS, who left the day before, joins us in this ascent. Brief exchanges because his rhythm is soon no longer compatible. His evening stop, mystery. Already the summit!

Another very fresh session to come. Crossing the Pas de la Fosse tunnel is a good moment. After the Col de l'EPINE the weather becomes more favorable. Another nice surprise to reach the Mont du CHAT viewpoint. Wouldn't I have toiled heavily at

times. Small frustration during the descent, beautiful viewpoint over the lake. Le BOURGET DU LAC, refueling place for our breakfast or even snacks for the following morning. Forgetting your "ears pods" and a charging cable at the VOREPPE hotel (or elsewhere?) requires the search for this last accessory. A little further on, I take the time to locate the hotel reserved for the evening. In the meantime, David SACHS joined us, he is also stopping there. This one is actually on the other side of the road!

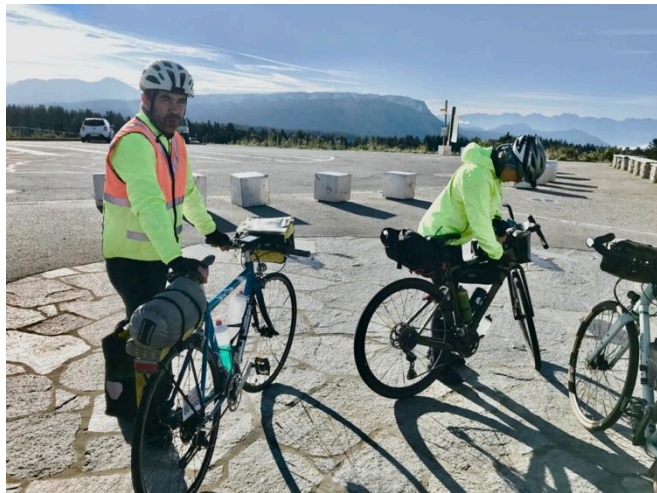


David SACHS et Doris HERMANN at VIVIER DU LAC

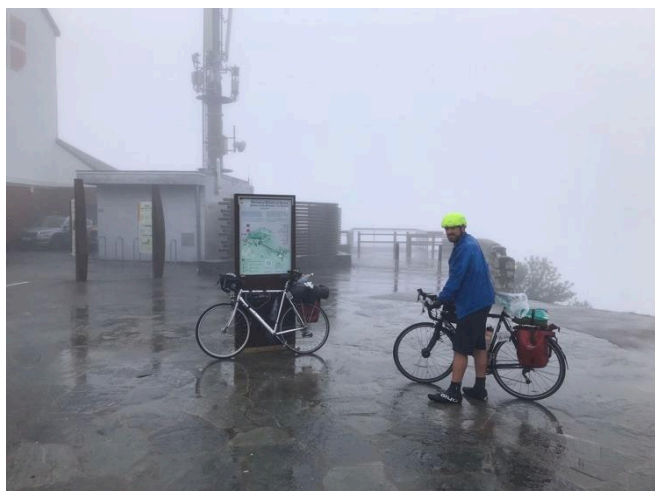
Always these improbable encounters during these Mille du Sud. Dinner together and appointment made for the next day. Drying session for the road map left at the bottom of the front bag! Its discoloration makes it significantly less usable. What a great idea to have removed the mudguards this time!

Friday September 6, 2024 VIVIER DU LAC ST PIERRE D'ALLEVARD

Simple alternative this morning still considered: re-inflating or replacing the inner tube? Finally re-inflates in the hotel corridor. A good warm-up before breakfast taken in your room. So I hear David get off his bike and go to the breakfast room, he leaves well before us. Will we ever see each other again? Long climb to REVARD. But clear sky and sea of clouds in the valley, surely one of the best spots of this edition. Well for us, because others suffered a lot once up there. Almost a desire to stand there. Here's a cyclist sitting on a bench a little further away. It's actually Philippe TESSIER who left on Monday evening.



Doris HERMANN and Philippe TESSIER at MONT REVARD



MONT REVARD Much less luck weather-wise for Mathias GANNSMANN and his companion in misfortune!

The showers of the day before dissuaded him from still playing roulette. Start of the joint descent. Common breakfast on the go in ST JULIEN D'ARVEY, then we won't see each other again. The MAROCAZ then CHAMPLAURENT passes fill the day well. A great discovery to take such a route today. So, quite a few photo stops. This RbnB evening, therefore, the ALLEVARD casino is well placed to buy a good dinner and breakfast. Supreme luxury washing machine, dryer and fan to leave with clean laundry. Note the nighttime deposit of stools by one of our host's two dogs in the hallway.

Saturday September 7, 2024 ST PIERRE D'ALLEVARD ST DISDIER EN DEVOLUY

Col du BARRIOZ, the smartphone flash has some difficulty. What a reward to see the tops of the rocky mountains being licked by the first rays of sun. And that's without counting the wooden frame houses! Near LAVAL, a sculptor has immortalized a crow and a fox. Further away (STE AGNES) trunks served as a support for the imagination of another. Meet again near LE MOLLARD by David SACHS. A bad night outside and stomach problems got the better of his tenacity; he gave up and plunged into the valley to reach base camp by train.



David SACHS gave up somewhere around MOLLARD village.

ST JEAN LE VIEUX marks the foot of the main ascent of the day. A portion of bad coating makes you fear the worst. Drink stop at the restaurant when joining the main road. Time to have a three-layer sandwich prepared for us (all from local products, the young boss tells me) and off we go. But it was a long climb up to CHAMROUSSE 1750. The finish barely accompanied by a duo of Canadian cyclists training as engineers in GRENOBLE. Once the "local food" sandwich has been swallowed, the long-awaited descent begins. Except that the LUITEL pass is not a long ribbon of quiet asphalt. Quite a few shocks on the agenda. The dried-up SECHILIENNE fountain encourages us to beg to fill our cans from a local woman. LAFFREY: drink stop then the wind comes around the edge of the lake. There is no help for us until LA MURE. What a beautiful descent to the PONSONNAS bridge.

No bungee jumping today. Call the stopover lodge in the evening to inform them of our arrival later than expected. This year, the wind turbines are operating near CORDEAC PELLAFOL and LES PLAYAS, which is a shame for our progress. But what memories this portion borrowed day and night. An unexpected encounter with a stone put an end to the possibility of reaching the lodge before nightfall. My two spare inner tubes do not retain the little air introduced, I benefit from one of that of. As we

begin the climb towards SAINT DISDIER in DEVOLUY, we come across a jogger signaled only by the oscillations of the lamp on his smartphone. This time there is no need to take the bikes up to the RIBIERES gite, a garage room in which many other bikes are already at rest. Dinner then shower then sleep.

Sunday September 8, 2024 ST DISDIER EN DEVOLUY Digne LES BAINS

Another big step ahead. The Col du NOYER offers its approach in complete tranquility despite the unappealing shade of gray in the sky. The wind is already present, and I scan the bend that will take me into it.



A double coat which makes them insensitive to the weather! Still this hidden ad for a beer brand!

At the top, toilets. I hadn't noticed them during the climbs on the opposite side. No waste of time for the photo, you must put on the rain jacket and approach the bends of the descent with caution. I glance from side to side of the road, looking for a bakery. That of LA FARE EN CHAMPSAUR is enough for our happiness. Sweat or rain, what's the difference on which one is quicker to disappear? LE FEIN, the effects will not be to reach the road sign (pun not easy to grasp by the translator of G...E). The LEBRAULT pass is one of the very steep passage "currently called gibonnades for some french long distance bikers" (allusion to the cleats proposed by Stéphane GIBON of the FFCT club of ST GERMAIN de TOURNEBUT during his crossings of France which certain French participants of the MDS already discovered).



SELONNET marks the irremediable disappearance of the visibility of my roadmap. Survivor of the unexpected immersion at the bottom of the front bag, it continues its decrepitude under the card holder.



Going up towards SEYNE LES ALPES

My road sheet in osmosis with the biker!

A search on the internet will be necessary for a better waterproof device. The bridge over the DURANCE marks the return of precipitation. Gray of the sky, but not in the hearts. SEYNE LES ALPES phew an open café, Sunday meeting of motorized two-wheelers, we will barely be the object of gaze from the bikers seated at tables with a beer in front of them. The packet of madeleines sponges up the café crème without any problem. We are cooling down quickly as we have done every time since this morning. Two more passes then the long descent towards DIGNE LES BAINS looms. This evening, great luxury in perspective. I booked away from town near the golf course. Shower and turn on the bathroom radiator because nothing is dry, despite the plastic bags as additional protection around my diaper. Large display on the bed. I know what a wet dog smells like, what must mine be like right now? Doris can chat with three Germans at the next table. Their astonishment is great at the description of our journey.

Monday September 9, 2024 DIGNE LES BAINS COTIGNAC

This morning: exemption. We take the time to enjoy the breakfast buffet. It's not two hours more time that changes things. Everything was able to dry overnight but we left the bedroom window wide open! Our table neighbors from the day before were quite surprised at the small amount of baggage for a week of mountain biking. No summit listed this morning, yet my legs don't want it. Finally, this edition will not deviate from the previous ones. The sun accompanies us, as do the smells of the vegetation.



COTIGNAC

The refectory welcomes us. A meal taken in complete tranquility. Sophie checks our photo controls and after discussing memorable periods, the route maps are issued. Cleaning the bike - which really needs it - between two beers on the program.

PS 1: During the closing ceremony of the PARIS 2024 Paralympic Games, a cover by the group DAFT PUNK (ONE MORE TIME) is played. How can we not draw a parallel with what I think is our wish for all participants in these editions of the Mille du Sud?

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ALBI Septembre 2024.