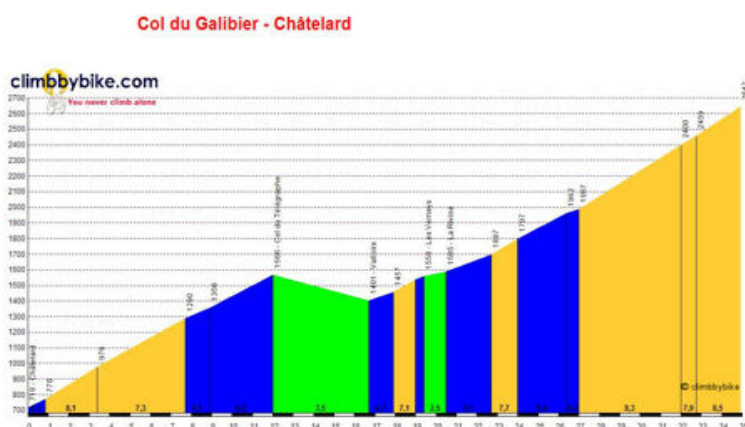


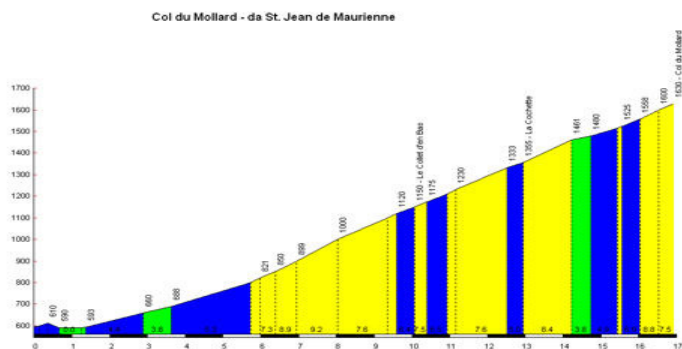
Club Trip to to France 2011– the Prequel

Plans were made, plots hatched, ferries booked, and we were off! Rick and Kath, that is. We decided that it was too far to travel all the way to Annecy just for a week, so we allowed ourselves the luxury of three. The plan was to toddle down through France, to arrive at Annecy a few days before Sue, Justin and Ian. On the way down we stayed at Reims, Troyes, Vezelay and Fleurie. At each place we managed some wonderful sightseeing, as well as getting our legs warmed up on the bikes, for the challenges to come! We then headed for St Jean de Maurienne, a Tour de France mad town in the heart of the “big climbs” country. We booked the motorhome onto the municipal campsite, which is called Les Grand Cols Camping – bit of a hint there then! In reception is a huge display cabinet with drinks bottles from every TdF team you've ever heard of, and some you probably haven't. Rick's first day was a ride up the valley for 10 miles to the foot of the Col du Telgraphe. A climb up here, to 1566m in blistering heat, then a swoop down to Valloire to the base of Le Col du Galibier. It goes up. It goes up a long way. It goes up a very long way! 20 miles in fact, to 2646m, making it a 30 mile ascent in total!

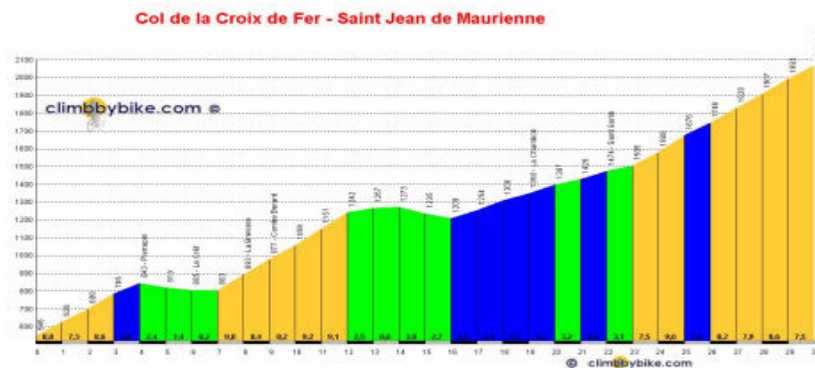


Magnificent views all around, including Mont Blanc, the scene of many of my Alpine exploits a few years ago. A few photos, then off back down. Back up and over Telegraphe (stopping on the summit for a well deserved beer, the back to the campsite. Kath had also had a challenging day, climbing to 1650m, up to St Michel, in the company of a local lady cyclist, the local GP.

Rick's next day objective was the 2076m high Col du Croix de Fer. Meanwhile, Kath set her sights on the 1638 m high Col du Mollard. We set of together, but soon went our separate ways in the valley above St Jean de Maurienne. Kath headed for the Col du Mollard, only to be met by a resounding “Non” when she asked if she could go through the road works. Not to be deterred, she had a nice ride, rode back down to the valley, had a spot of lunch, then climbed back up a seemingly never-ending series of switchbacks, to arrive at her day's target. Good effort!

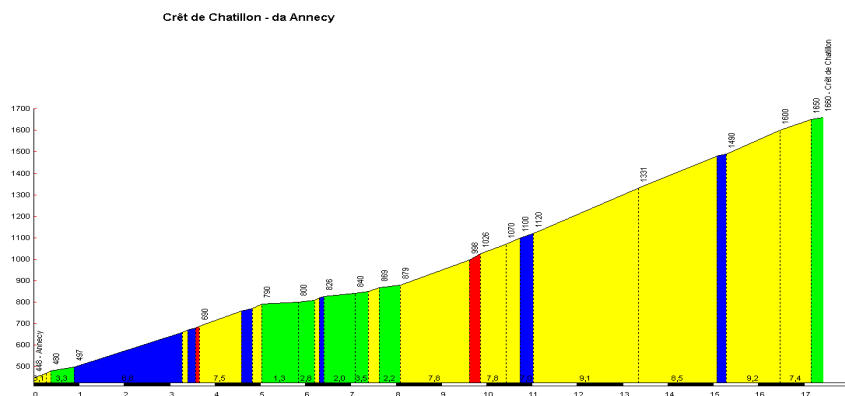


Rick, in the meantime was battling with the heat, riding 10 miles, to an altitude of 1664 m – up the wrong valley! Nice though La Toussuire is, it wasn't on the plan! A rapid descent of a 1000m regained the route, and a steady climb up to the 2067m high summit, for a beer and the regulation photo.



An exciting run down, then, having been warned of the road closure by Kath, Rick found another way to inflict pain, by returning to camp via the Col du Mollard – only Rick got the easier side!

Next day, it was pack up, hit the road, and head for Annecy. Several great bike rides, including Cret de Chatillon, 1699m (both of us), the Col du Contrebandiers 1054m (Rick), Col de Leschaux 897m (Rick) and the Col de Bluffy 630m (both of us).



A good warm up, I'm sure you'll agree, prior to the arrival of the rest of the team. But that, children, as my Gran used to say – is another story! Over to you, Justin!