

Spain

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Date: 24-sept-2007

Stage: Åger to Riba-Roya-d'Ebre

Distance: 112+26tt km

Ascent: 1040m

Temp (L/M/H): 13/26/42

KCal: 2631

Time: 8 h 11 m

Country: Spain

A new event was organized for today, a time-trail for those that felt strong enough doing so. On a distance of 26km you need to try to go as fast as you can, not helped by anybody that is in front of you. As I never did something like that in my life, and as I heard that you “die” a couple of times during such an event, I thought to try it and test my speed.

Jenny felt that this was nothing for her and indeed, it is a tough thing to do. The first 6 km were uphill, I started first and 2 minutes later the next one person started, my friend Marius. As he is much



stronger in the uphill as I am, I expected him to catch me in the clime, but I was surprise not to see him passing. In the downhill, my favorite, I went as fast as I could, but unfortunately it was not only a downhill, but also some rolling hills in the rest of the trail. Just before the finish he passed me, but none of the others did, so for a first time trail I kind of felt happy with the result, finishing in 59 minutes and 16 seconds.

Jenny left with others ahead of the participants to the time trail, so we kind of arrived together at the finish and continued to the lunch-van over nice roads to the town of Lleida.

Finding our way after lunch through the town was a bit difficult, but with the help of locals and a very friendly guy in a minibus, we managed to find the right road.

As mentioned, our doctor Nynke left the group and got replaced by Didier, a Belgian who is going to stay with us till Marrakech.

After the usual coke stop we arrived close to our camping by passing the dam, of Presa de Riba-roya where we camped at the waterfront and enjoyed a couple of nice tap beers on the terrace.

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Date: 25-sept-2007
Stage: Ribe-Roya-d'Ebre to Mas de la Matas
Distance: 128 km
Ascent: 2005 m
Temp (L/M/H): 17/21/39
KCal: 2651

Time: 9 h 09 m

Country: Spain

Many climbing meters were on the menu for today, first over small roads to a kind of plateau, where a project was underway to supply the vineyard, almond trees and olive trees with water. A huge project with pipes and canals all over the place.

The towns we went through were kind of empty, not much to see.

Further on the road we passed the meridian of Greenwich, apparently exactly at the time the sun is in its summit as you can see from the second photo. Interesting, and something you cannot see on the photo is that it was taken at 13:51, so it is clear that our European summertime is somewhat ahead of the time of the sun.

Except for the vineyards, almond trees, etc. the people here have a lot of pig farms and the smell of it is very pungent to say the least. Especially when you either pass such a farm or if a truck with pigs is passing you.

Every time we came close to such a pig farm the number of flies that wanted to have a free ride on our arms or face, was irritating, especially if you are in an uphill, not going that fast and sweating.

As wine lovers, we liked the smell of the grapes that are fermenting, more. The harvest is in full swing in this area. Nice churches can be found along the road, like for instance this one called Montserrat.

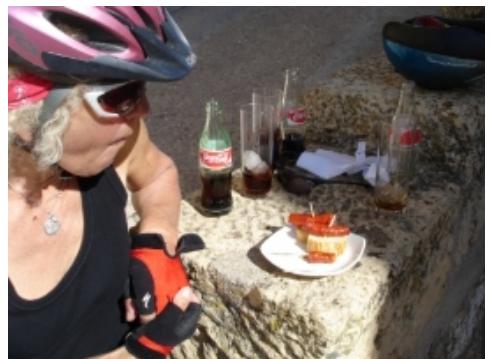
In a pub where we took coke, we also found nice tapas and we tried to communicate with the locals, mainly old men. A major problem in this area is that the young



people go to the big cities and do not want to stay here, where the live is much harder and the money not so easy to make.

Our stage ended at a nice camping, where in the evening the sheep came back from the meadows, which off course makes another nice picture.

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Date: 26-sept-2007

Stage: Ribe-Roya-d'Ebre to Allepuz

Distance: 108 km

Ascent: 2645 m

Temp (L/M/H): 10/15/23

KCal: 2886

Time: 10 h 03 m

Country: Spain

A lot of wind during the night did not predicted an easy day. That, and the fact that we had to climb a lot of meters, made us get on the road as early as we could.

Just before the sun rose we started the first of several climbs and were immediately taken by the beauty of the

landscape.

That first climb brought us to a stunning view on a artificial lake and windmills who were doing a very good job given the strong winds we experienced.

We passed the medieval town of Mirambel were we made a small detour to see the town and buy some drinks and food as our lunch was still far out.

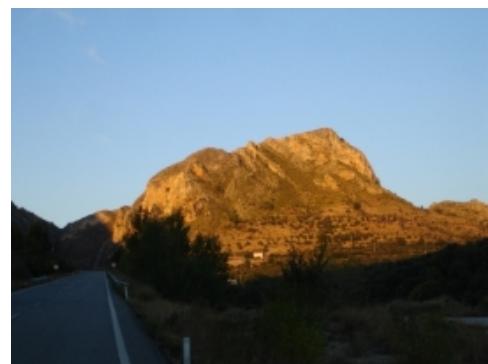
The roads in Mirambel are still made of old stones, which gives a very special look to the town.

On average we had a 8% clime and the first pass was very difficult due to the wind, the second was a bit easier as we were protected from the wind by the forest surrounding us, the 3rd pass of that day was the easiest, but because of the effort done on the first two, not as easy as it could have been. Getting down with temperatures around 10degrees was a challenge as well, but it was compensated by beautiful views of the area.

The camping was announced the day before, as “camping in the garden of a house”, that house had become a nice bar and hotel since last year and Jenny and I were lucky to find a room there. We really needed that after this day, we can tell you! The owner offered us one of his private rooms, apparently one used by his children as Jenny slept in a bed with sheets of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.

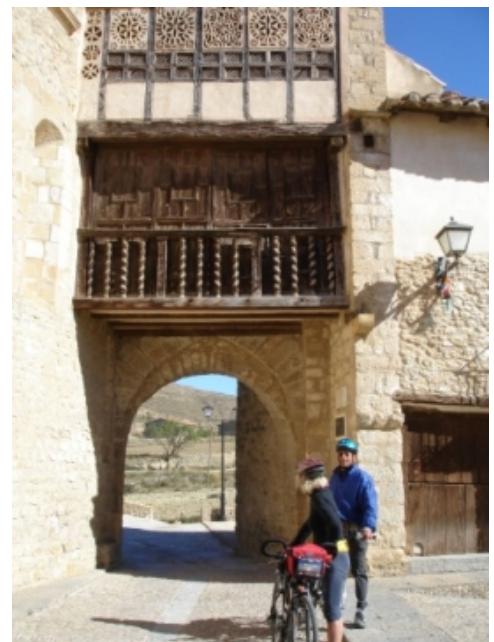
The barman Raphaël made our day with good wine, as well as the Paella prepared by our cook Rudy.

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Travel journal

Published: Wednesday, 08 May 2019 12:53
Written by Kees Vonk



Travel journal

Published: Wednesday, 08 May 2019 12:53
Written by Kees Vonk



Date: 27-sept-2007

[Stage: Allepuz to Albarracin](#)

[Distance: 90 km](#)

[Ascent: 1385 m](#)

[Temp \(L/M/H\): 4/10/22](#)

[KCal: 1731](#)

[Time: 6 h 45 m](#)

[Country: Spain](#)

As today we only needed to do 90km, we left 1 hour later, and that was a very good idea, because it was only 4 degrees when we started at 9:00 o'clock.

On the top of the first pass, we took a photo and Jenny wanted to stay between Edwin much longer to get warm! But the panorama was great.

In the descent with speeds of +70km/h on my Polar, our friend Jan got very, very cold feet and during lunch was treated on a warm footbath by the doctor Didier. The lunch was in Teruel, under a nice aqua duct were we meet a lot of people that asking us where we were cycling to and that were reassuring us that temperatures that we are experiencing today are an exception. We have to believe them.

Meeting people on the road is always nice, especially if it is a shepherd with a nice donkey that is herding +1000 sheep.

In a canyon we found very special rocks in a natural park that brought us to the very nice medieval town of Albarracin.

It was still rather cold when we arrived at campsite and to get warm Jenny and I found a nice spot next to the toilets where we were protected from the wind and were sitting in the sun for some time. We looked like the people that are guarding and cleaning the toilets in supermarkets!

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Travel journal

Published: Wednesday, 08 May 2019 12:53
Written by Kees Vonk



Travel journal

Published: Wednesday, 08 May 2019 12:53
Written by Kees Vonk



Date: 28-sept-2007

Stage: Albarracin to Cuenca

Distance: 108 km

Ascent: 1110 m

Temp (L/M/H): -3/10/28

KCal: 1638

Time: 8 h 46 m

Country: Spain

Cold, cold, cold. At least for the first couple of hours of the day. First of all to get out of bed and prepare ourselves at 6:30 in the morning, with temperatures below zero. Especially difficult because our night was not too good, first of all because of the low temperatures, but secondly because young Italians wanted to

continue there talking in their tent next to ours until 3:00am.

After two visits to their tent they finally stopped their conversation, Jan joined me in this effort and said that if they would not stop talking he would throw a bucket of water in their tent, fortunately he did not do that.

We left around 8:00am and were already very cold when passing the town of Albarracin, through a tunnel into a very nice canyon, where we experienced the lowest temperature on the trip so far, minus 3 degrees Celsius. We stopped several times to warm our feet and hands. Jenny did not say anything, as she was busy "surviving" and Edwin had such cold hands that I had to warm his by taking them into my hands. We stopped a second time near a statue of Maria, where the sun started to shine and we tried to warm our feet and hands again.

Fortunately the sun kept his promise and did warm us up that day, we started with 5 layers of clothes and ended with 2 as the temperature rose to 28 degrees, so a rise of 31 degrees in one day. We cannot remember having had that experience before in our lives and perhaps we kind of want to keep it that way.

The roads were very scenery, lots of forest, and the traffic was minimal. There is plenty of space in this part of Spain. Somewhere on our road we encountered a monument of Rio Tajo. Although we know that the river we followed is called like that we found was no explanation about the monument, so we have Google it up later when we get to Internet.

A nice a steep downhill brought close to the campsite, passing rivers and a canyon (Ventano del Diablo).



At the camp we celebrated Liset's birthday with a real cake and chocolate milk with rum after a very nice meal (again!) from Rudy and Marianne.

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[Date: 29-sept-2007](#)
[Stage: Cuenca \(rest day\)](#)

During the night it started to rain and a small thunderstorm came over our camping

as well. Many of us had put their laundry out and were confronted with a very wet set of clothes in the morning.

As Jenny's hip joint still gave her a problem, and as sitting in a tent during the whole day was not our idea of having a holiday, we rented a bungalow that we mainly used to dry our laundry and those of some of the other cyclist. So the bungalow looked more like a tumble dryer.

Internet seems to be a problem in Cuenca, but we are going to try to send this report as soon as possible.

Participants

One of the 3 Dutch couples are Piet and Hetty, who have undertaken many trips in Europe already. A very performant team, Jordan is after her father Mike left us in Le Puy on her own, but will soon be joined in Granada by her mother, who will instead of Big Mike pedal to Dakar.

Mieke likes to cycle on her own and take plenty of pictures on the trip.

WRAPPERS project (We Reduce All Possible Pollution Every Race Stage)

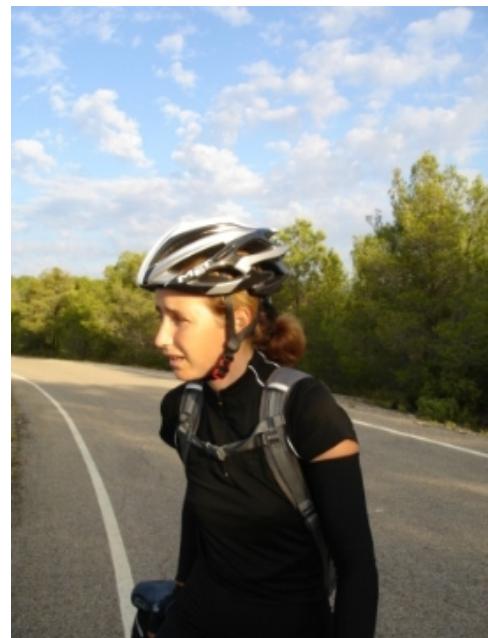
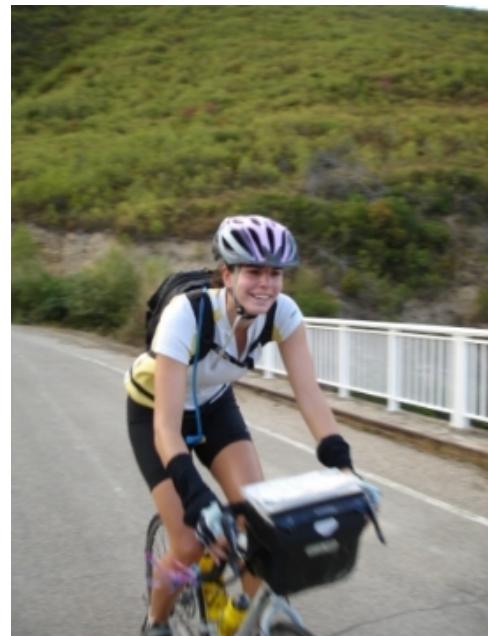
Perhaps some of you already heard about this or read about it on the organisation's website www.bikedreams.com, but Jenny and I started the initiative of collecting the wraps of our Maxim energy bars at the end of each stage and donate money per collected wrapper to the two organizations Right to Play and SOS Kinderdorpen. Our motivation was to keep the roads in France clean and to get funds for the two organizations.

The project works out wonderful in France we collected for an equivalent of 155 euros. We asked if others would continue



the project for the other countries we are cycling through and we are very glad that many are enthusiastic about it. Andorra was covered by Michele and Nynke, and Spain is now covered by a team of 5 people. Morocco is on the horizon and we already have a candidate for that country as well. If we continue like this, and are able to find sponsors for the stage in the Western Sahara, Mauritania and Senegal, we might be able to donate something in the order of 800 euros during the trip.

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Date: 30-sept-2007

Stage: Cuenca to Alercón

Distance: 98 km

Ascent: 850 m

Temp (L/M/H): 9/20/29

KCal: 1815

Time: 5 h 20 m

Country: Spain

As you know, on the way the Carcassonne,

Jenny fell down when I stopped for a dog that tried to attack us. She collided with the back of my bike and had some minor injuries we thought, but her left hip joint gave her problems when walking (but not during cycling). She felt not too good about the recovery process (too slow) and so decided not to cycle for the days between Cuenca and Granada. A difficult decision for someone that loves to cycle. More on this in the report at the end.

We started this stage in convoy to get through Cuenca, it went a bit slow. Arnoud got cramps during the start and finally decided to stay behind with his parents to try to fight it as he absolutely likes to get to Dakar on his bike. He made it that day, and the days after. A courageous man indeed!

As mentioned above, Jan, Edwin and I were on our own, leaving Jenny in the lunch van. It is strange to see her bike on the roof of the van.

At lunch we saw Jenny back in the center of a small town where the fountain must have looked beautiful, but unfortunately there was not water in it, so the lions looked like they were smoking a cigarette.

Whenever we stay at lunch, people come to talk with us and we hand them postcards from the Paris Dakar event, they love it as you can see.

Spain has a lot of sun and wind, the windmills we already have seen earlier and frequently during the trip. Close to Alercón we saw huge constructions of sun collectors. We never have seen so many of them in a field together.

Today is Christopher's birthday, so we called Denmark and we took a glass of champagne together with some friend to



celebrate it. He is 2 years already and we miss him.

At the campsite, where we arrived really early due to the short distance and the favorable conditions, the showers did not say Man and Women, but Chicos on one side. As there was nothing written on the other door, and as the word chicos is close to chicks, some of the male English/American speaking cyclist were on the “wrong” side of the building taking a shower. It created some interesting situations.



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Date: 1-oct-2007

Stage: Alercón to Mesones

Distance: 174 km

Ascent: 1425 m

Temp (L/M/H): 15/20/35

KCal: 3369

Time: 9 h 43 m

Country: Spain

A long trip was on the schedule today, the longest so far and before lunch we had those endless roads that we remember so well from our trip through Botswana and Namibia. The kind of roads, where not only the power of the legs is important, but especially the power of the brains. But with some coke stops we managed to get to lunch at 90kms exactly at noon.

As there was a lot of wind in the afternoon, many of us tried to cycle together to be able to use the wind shade of the one in front of you.

Jenny was not very happy today, being in the lunch van for the second day. I have



permissions to show you this photo, where you see prove of that.

After many kilometers we reached the Col Las Crucetas together with Mathew, who had a difficult day (who did not!) and wanted to join us.

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Date: 2-oct-2007

Stage: Mesones to Cazorla

Distance: 138 km

Ascent: 1695 m

Temp (L/M/H): 12/19/26

KCal: 2048

Time: 8 h 54 m

Country: Spain

Leaving the next day, we had to go back on our road and up a hill where road construction was going on. Partly the downhill was difficult as the gravel and sand made us to brake and not go on full speed. But a bit later, there were the work was almost finished, we had black silk and we went down like rockets, reaching Andalusia as the next province in our tour through Spain.

More and more olive trees were found alongside the road and after a descent alongside an artificial lake, we reach the lunch stop close to the dam of the lake.



Hygiene is vital important when you are traveling with a group and Rudy and Marianne are very strict that everybody washes their hands before touching any food. First the soap wash, then the wash with chlorine and finally rinsing everything from your hands. No drying with a towel, just shake the water off!

Finding the campsite in Cazorla was a challenge for some of us. Jan, Edwin and I had to ask several time as well, but Marius and Hannie were the champions, they managed to get police escort to camp and paid two energy bars for it.

On the campsite a lot of kittens were walking around, begging for food. I could not resist playing with one of them, after having feed her with some chorizo. Apparently she did not had enough yet as during the dish wash she “cleaned” one of the cooking pans.

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[Date: 3-oct-2007](#)

[Stage: Cazorla to Granada](#)

[Distance: 150 km](#)

[Ascent: 1785 m](#)

[Temp \(L/M/H\): 17/22/36](#)

[KCal: 2284](#)

[Time: 9 h 33 m](#)

[Country: Spain](#)

At night it started to rain, so getting on our bikes was a bit slow. For some very slow, as it appeared that their bikes were stolen. I said “appeared” because it was a trick from Wilbert who found several bikes not looked the night before and decided to raise a warning, by removing the bikes

from the spot the owners had put them and locking them in a safe place somewhere else. Some worried faces were walking around the campsite for some time.

Needless to say that when Wilbert announced that their bikes were not stolen, a great relief went through the campsite. Wilbert better takes care about his own belongings from now on as some might want to take revenge for it!

We left in the rain today, but fortunately not too heavy, although our bikes were in no time totally dirty with mud, as the roads were often used by tractors who left dirt on the roads.

We did see many olive trees yesterday, but today it was impressive to see all the hills, almost to the top, being populated with them.

It was a long road to lunch, especially because the scenery was almost the same for miles and miles, that is to say, olive trees, olive trees and to make it worse, olive trees, every where you could see. But it does create beautiful pictures!

Jenny was again at lunch and had an interesting encounter with a man of 72 years who told her that since 1948 he had cycled more than a million kilometers. He was very interested in our event and absolutely wanted to be on the phone with her. He gladly accepted that invitation, as he told her that "he started cycling when she was not yet born"! So he estimated her at least 5 years younger than she actually is.

In the after noon the roads were better, although the last part to get to Granada was difficult, with many up and down hills. We arrived just before the thunderstorm, that we saw developing in



the area, decided to start the downpour of rain and fortunately, Jenny did manage to get a room at the campsite. So no unpacking of tent and no wet clothes and bikes.

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Date: 4-oct-2007

Stage: Granada (rest day)

Jenny and I spend the morning going to the hospital close by, accompanier by our nurse Didier, to have Jenny examined on her left hip, which she injured 2 weeks ago and that was still giving her problems. We wanted to make absolutely sure that she would not further hurt herself when continuing cycling.

The doctor in the hospital had the same diagnosis as Didier, "nothing serious", a muscle is damaged and as long as she does not feel pain during cycling, she can continue the trip. Rest would be even better, but she does not want to get to Dakar sitting in the lunch van, so tomorrow she will be on her bike again, most likely a half day to lunch.

She cried, first because she misunderstood the doctor, who kind of told her in half English half Spanish to go home (but the doctor did not understand that we were on his mega trip to Dakar!) and later because of what was finally diagnosed. On your bike and go, go, go!

Jenny also was emotional when Edwin left our group, he planned to do Paris to Granada only and early this morning left with his fully loaded bike to go to Malaga



when he will catch a plane tomorrow to go back to Rotterdam. Jenny and I will miss him, he has been cycling with us almost every day and we have become close friends in the weeks that lay between those two cities.

Tomorrow we will have a very tough day, many climbs and another 150 km to go. In 3 days from now we finally will leave Europe and take the ferry to Morocco, Africa here we come again!

Participants

Rik is our bicycle repair man. A very skilled person, who was able to rebuild John's bike (his carbon frame broke) on the rest day in Cuenca in less than 1,5 hour. We are all very happy with him and hope he will be able to stay the whole trip.

One of the two organizers Rob has a very special diet; he eats bananas with chocopast and peanut butter during the lunch stop. He won the Tour d'Afrique in 2004, so may be this is his secret!

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Date: 5-oct-2007

Stage: Granada to Antequera

Distance: 155 km

Ascent: 2410 m

Temp (L/M/H): 11/20/29

KCal: 3312

Time: 10 h 01 m

Country: Spain

After having send our report from Granada

from the Internet café where we also were able to see our grandson Christopher on Skype again (Jenny was kissing him via the webcam, you should have seen the other people in the café looking at us!) we had some nice tapas with a glass of wine and a special Spanish meal in a restaurant where the waiter was very friendly.

At the start of this day (a long one, and with plenty of kilometers and a very steep hill at the end) we heard that Mariska had to go home due to her illness, she tried to get healthy during the trip but traveling around and getting healthy was a No No. A pity, we would have loved her staying with us till Granada.

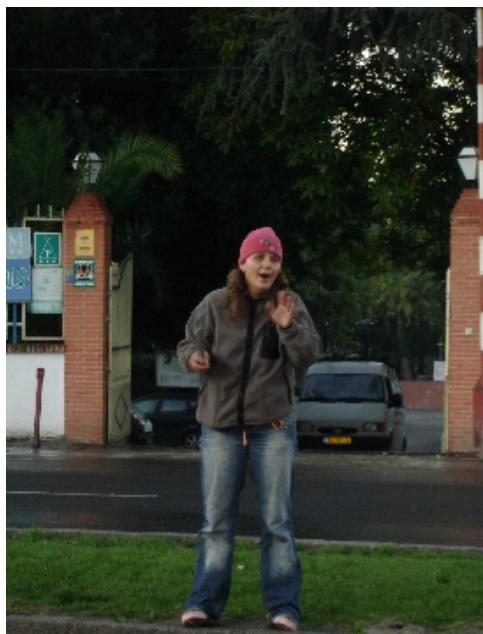
We also have 3 new members in the group, two people from Switzerland, Andrea and Beat, and one from the USA, the mother of Jordan, who is replacing her dad, we had to leave behind in Le Puy as you might remember.

And... Jenny is back on the bike!

We went shortly after 8:00 from the camp through lively traffic, following Wilbert through small streets, so small that Rik, who was driving at the back of the convoy, was not able to see where we went and got lost. Wilbert found him back and we continued a cold first hour on the bike. Once we were on our own, we had beautiful roads and passed the dam of another artificial lake near Bermejales.

In a downhill we saw men getting the almonds from the trees, we stopped to take photos and they gave us a handful of their product.

In the afternoon we saw the Sea back (last seen when we left our house on the 7th of September). It felt a bit like going home....



After a very steep descent of 13% we had to go right and Rob and Wilbert, knowing that last year some continued straight on and where lost for hours, had put some warning signals up and also instructions on paper hidden under a stone. We were very glad they did this as there was indeed a risk to get lost here.

After a town called Villanueva de la Concepción, where some of us had to get off their bike due to the very steep hills, we had to get almost straight up, a challenge, but we made it. Even Jenny, back on her bike after 4 days of rest, made it, she is a superwoman.



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Travel journal

Published: Wednesday, 08 May 2019 12:53
Written by Kees Vonk



Date: 6-oct-2007

Stage: Antequera to Rhonda

Distance: 100 km

Ascent: 1435 m

Temp (L/M/H): 12/23/34

KCal: 1655

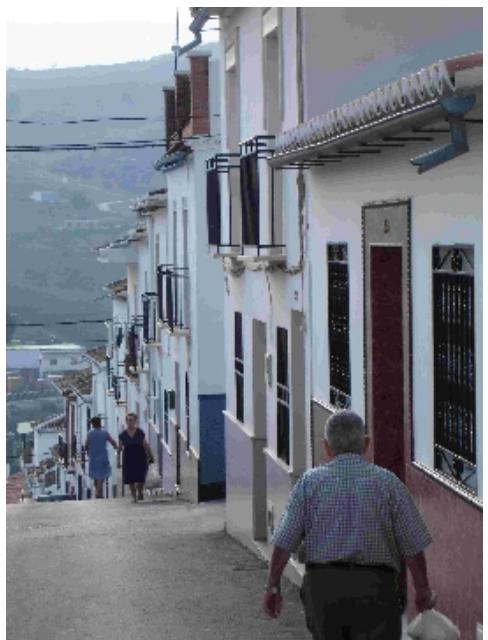
Time: 6 h 48 m

Country: Spain

Yesterday evening we decided again not to camp, but take a room, so that we could relax better after the long trip of yesterday. We started later, as the distance was not too large. Soon after our departure we found some goats on rocks.



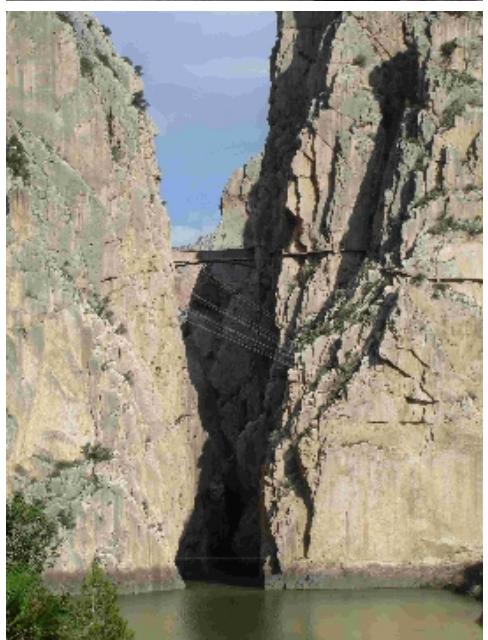
And very steep hills in the villages we passed that were sometimes difficult to manage, but are beautiful to take pictures from.



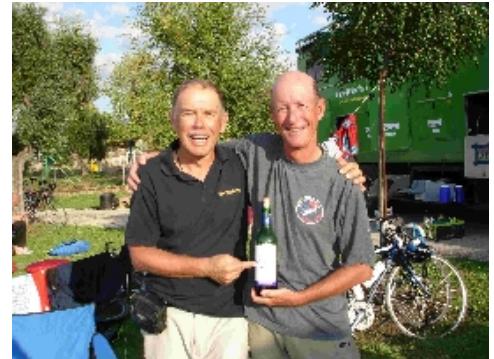
Especially when we were down at an other artificial lake with breathtaking sceneries of the rocks surrounding it.

Hannie and Marius found a nice bottle of wine that was called Don Opas, so the two Opa's (grandfathers) needed to get on picture with it.

While we went to bed, many of those that love Rugby went to the nice town of Rhonda so see the match between New Zealand and France. Unfortunately for John, New Zealand lost and Christian is a very happy man now. Lets hope the best for the half finale for France against England.



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Date: 7-oct-2007

Stage: Rhonda

Distance: 113 km

Ascent: 1120 m

Temp (L/M/H): 12/25/35

KCal: 1849

Time: 6 h 10 m

Country: Spain

The last stage in Europe, a short one with a difficult end, we had to look for the road to Algeciras that cyclist can take as most of the roads are blocked by the highways alongside the sea. Some of us spend many hours looking for the right road. The organization is treating us here real well; we are sleeping tonight in a 4 star hotel, close to the terminal where tomorrow at 11:00 we will take the ferry to Ceuta.



During this trip, we first were high in the mountains and passed many beautiful villages, all with houses that are painted so white, that it is almost painful to look at.



Close to Algeciras, many electricity poles are equipped with a nest for storks, only a few are occupied by them and in passing they quietly are looking from their high position to these cyclists trying to find the right road to the hotel.

The hotel is beautiful, a pity we can only stay here for one night, but the Tour will not wait for anybody, so we will get on our bikes tomorrow morning to get to Ceuta and pass the border to Morocco, the 4th country we go through.

Spain

Spain has been a discovery for us; we find in general the people very friendly and the roads we cycled beautiful. The cars and trucks on the road are not very aggressive with us, on the contrary, they waited before passing and often where signaling their horns to let us know they were getting through.

Alongside the road, especially down south, we found signs alongside the roads, warning the drivers to take care.

Only two kind of negative points, first the amount of dirt alongside the roads; plenty of tins, bottles, etc. are thrown out of the windows, and secondly the number of dogs that are guarding the houses but are put on a chain. But other than that, we love Spain!

Participants

Andy is a special participant, the is following the tour on his motorbike and will continue after Dakar to cross the North Africa to Cairo. As he can go much fast as we do, he can take time to relax on the road and still be in time to arrive in camp for dinner.

Janet, joined us in Granada and is the other participant that has a mirror on her helmet as you can see.

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