

Andorra

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Date: 22-sept-2007

Stage: Andorra La Vella to Åger

Distance: 143 km

Ascent: 1695m

Temp (L/M/H): 15/20/28

KCal: 2763

Time: 9 h 10 m

Country: Andorra

The whole night we experienced rain on the tent, so I had nightmares of getting to the top of the Port de Cantó (1725m) in the rain, but the temperature was all right, so snow, as the Paris-Dakar participants experienced in 2006 was not likely to happen. After breakfast the rain stopped and we even saw a few blue spots in the small piece of sky above us.

In convoy we passed the frontier between Andorra and Spain and had some very angry drivers of cars and motorcycles around us, we got upset with our speed, which was btw quite high as we went all downhill.

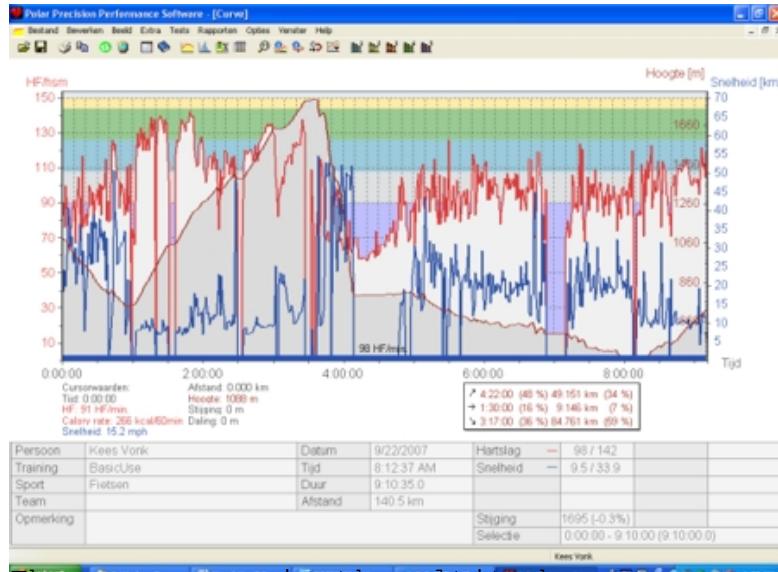
Most of us were glad to leave Andorra, the scenery is not too fantastic, the whole valley is completely filled with concrete in a East-Block country style of the 50's.

Andorra is most famous about the fact that it is a tax haven, yesterday beer was bought for 15 eurocents per tin and



whiskey/whisky is only 5 euros! And what about the price of fuel, big difference with the surrounding countries indeed.

The first 25 km went very fast, too fast for some of us, at Adrall where we needed to start the ascent to Port de Cantó, half a dozen went straight on and only because Liset did a “ jump ” to the group to warn them, they realized their mistake after 5 km's on the wrong road. Most of us were already climbing the very steep road, as you can see from attached snapshot of the data that was captured on my Polar.



The gray area is the altitude, so especially the first 5 kilometers were at 10% or more. That did not withhold young athletes to get into condition for the Youth World Championship by ascending on their cross country skies with rollers. One boy of about 15 years was behind my bike and I had really to push the pedals to stay ahead of him, doing close to 12 km/h.

We reached the top 3,5 hours after the start in Andorra and went downhill on a very nice long 15km scenery road, despite the cloudy conditions.



Like yesterday, we took our mountain jackets up the hill (another 3 kilo's with the pannier on my bike!), but it was worth the effort, downhill at speeds up to 50 km/h and more and almost not pedaling, you get cold due to the chill factor.

After lunch the roads were a lot easier, with tunnels, most of which we were allowed to take as a cyclist, except for one (some said 2, but we did not see the signs apparently), but the old road was worth the detour, a small road alongside the river was much nicer than the tunnel.

After a coke stop in Tremp (we did not see the Lady...) we took a right turn to Åger, the organization had warned for a rough road, that was an understatement, it was a dirt road, due to the reconstruction of the road we drove on sand and stones. It brought back sweet memories of the Tour d'Afrique and even the picture taken could easily be mistaken for one taken in Tanzania.

The last 20 minutes we experienced rain, and with the sand it quickly became mud. It caused for our Hawaiian friend Kevin a major problem, his shifter was stuck by the mud and was totally ruined. Hopefully Rik the mechanic will be able to fix it.

The doctor Nynke will leave us here in Åger, and we celebrated it with some beer and wine till quite late in the evening for a group of cyclist that just did 300km and over 5000 meters of climbing in the last 3 days. Fortunately it's a rest day tomorrow, we need it!

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Date: 23-sept-2007

Stage: Rest day in Åger

A special start of this day, it's the birthday of Christian and the cook Mariska and truck driver Adam prepared a champagne breakfast for him. The rest of the day we did a bit more celebration of that birthday and the usual cleaning of clothes and bikes. As there is nothing else to do here in Åger on a Sunday, we took it easy to be prepared for the next stage through Spain.

The camping had WiFi (wireless Internet), so we were able to talk with our children in Allerød via Internet. Although I know how everything technically works, it is still amazing that in the middle on "nowhere", in a small town in Spain, you can talk and see your children. We even saw Christopher, but unfortunately he was asleep so we could not "talk" to him, next time better.

We had a party that day as we wrote about in our last newsletter (birthday of Christian) but also a first goodbye, our doctor Nynke left us and was meeting her family here in Åger to spend one week of real holiday in Spain. Father Postma was able to help Jan with the problem with his left leg. He still is suffering from it and is a courageous man that he continuous cycling.

Adam on his "rest day" was very busy with changing things in the truck. Space is needed to install a water tank that we need in Africa.

Participants

Three more cyclists, our friends, Hannie



and Marius, with their son Arnoud. Father and mother did the Tour d'Afrique in 2005 and you might soon see them in an article in the Dutch newspaper de Telegraaf, so watch that space.

Marius is a very strong cyclist, who during the TdA2005 stitched many unfortunate participants. So many that the organization asked a surgeon to be part of our tour in 2006! Fortunately no work for him during this trip and we hope that it can stay that way! Hannie loves to cycle within a group and is using the same bike as in 2005. Arnoud only did minimal preparation for the trip, but that does not withhold him to be one of the first in camp. A real talent and a good son of his father.

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