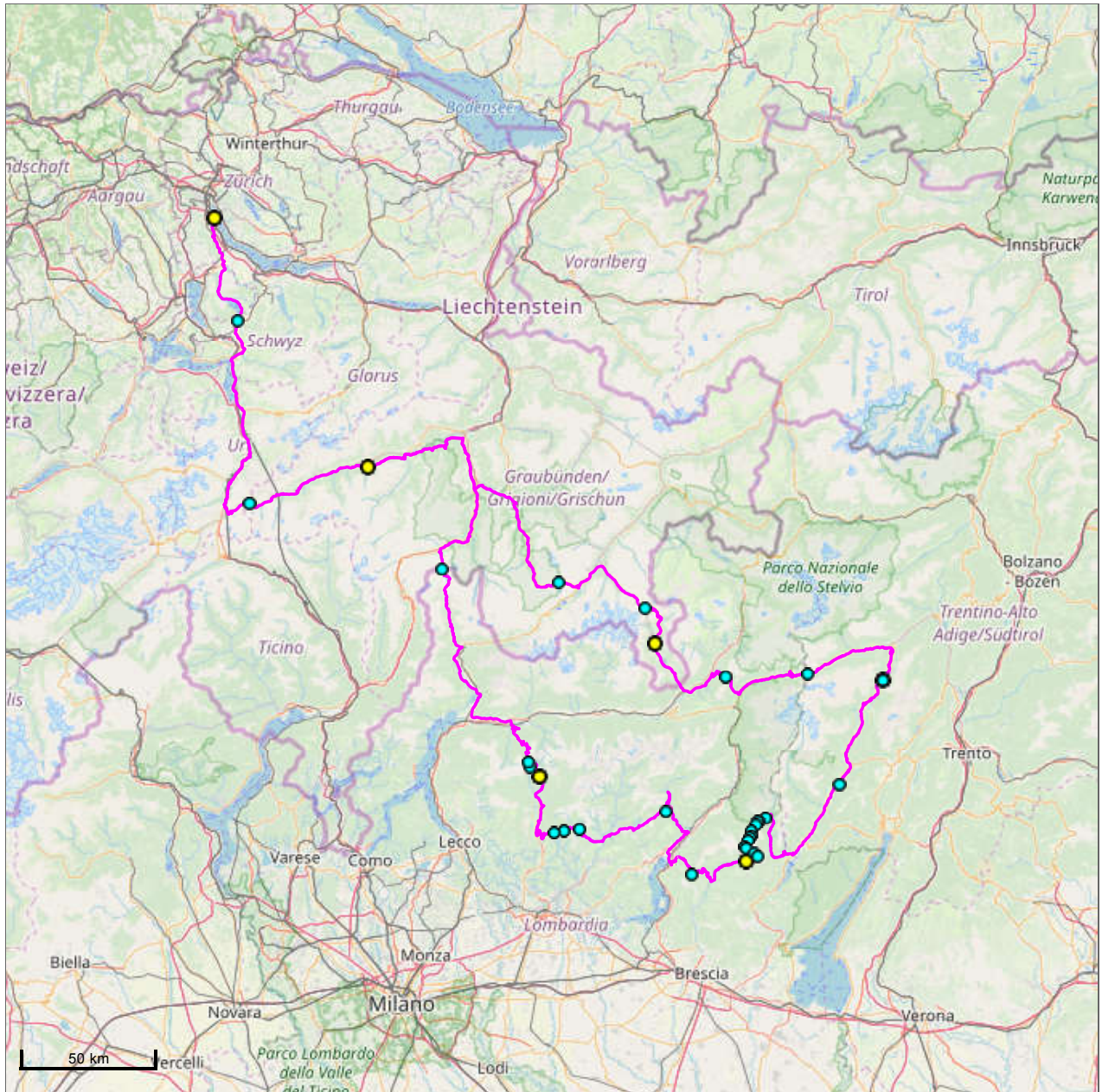
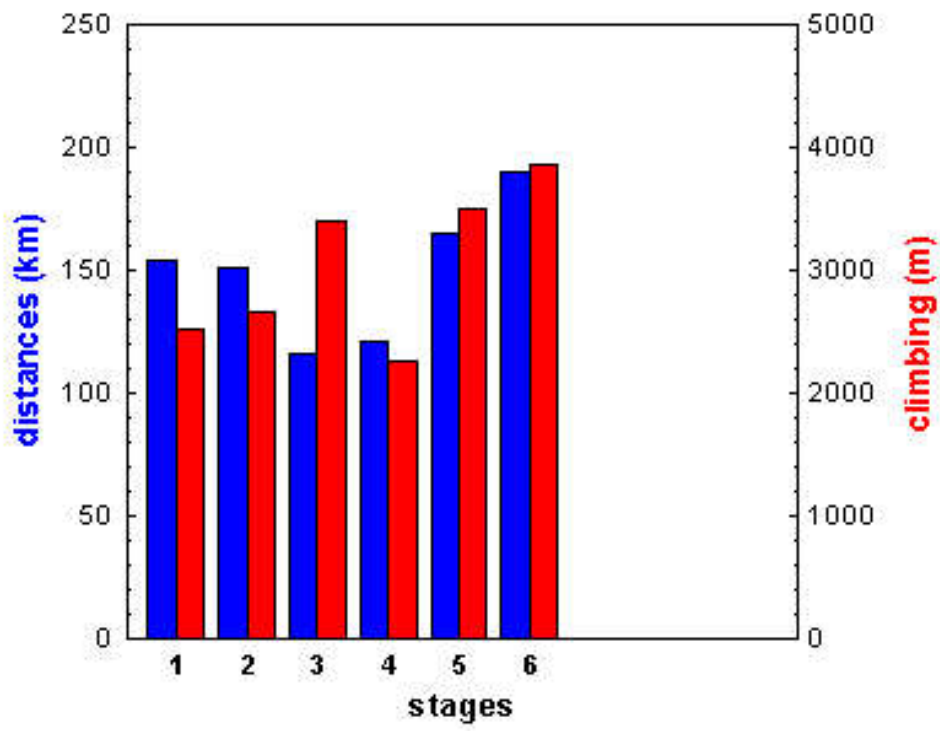


# Bicycle tour 2002, 12 - 20 July

Patrick Schleppe

stage	distance (km)	climbing (m)
Kilchberg - Sattel - Oberalp - Giraniga	154	2620
Giraniga - Julier - Bernina - Poschiavo	151	2810
Poschiavo - Foppa - Tonale - Campo Carlo Magno	116	3370
Campo Carlo Magno - Tione - Croce Domini - Maniva - San Colombano	121	2260
San Colombano - Zeno - Presolana - Zambla - Mezzoldo	165	3490
Mezzoldo - S. Marco - Splügen - Giraniga	190	3910
<b>total</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>18460</b>





At the Foppa pass, one of the hardest road passes



Narrow hairpin curves on the south slope of the Splügen pass

## Stage 1 (12 July 2002): Kilchberg - Sattel - Oberalp - Giraniga

It was the third time that i was riding on the way of this first stage and i did not yet need a map... the reason why i almost forgot it at home. My main concerns were about the lack of training (so far not even 2000 km this year) and an aching wrist, an aching shoulder and an aching ankle. Obviously, i have a few more years than when i rode over the Oberalp for the first time in 1991! All these small pains, however, were rather less as soon as i was riding towards the foothills of the Alps, then to the Alps themselves.

The weather was nice on this Friday morning. And even if the forecasts were bad for the Saturday, i started the ride. I wanted anyway to take a day off already after the first stage, at Obersaxen. The same day, Catrina, my girlfriend, was indeed also going to Obersaxen, but by car, with her father. She could therefore take my small baggage, and we could meet there at the chalet.

The beginning of summer vacations brought some more traffic on the roads, but nothing too bad (at least on my road; on the highway to the Gotthard i could see some traffic jams). I stopped in Göschenen, to have a drink on the terrace of a restaurant, which i could enjoy it since the main road now goes around the village and no longer through it. I continued the climb with no hurry and reached the **Oberalp** pass in the middle of the afternoon. In the descent, i lost the cap of one of my bottles. Not so terrible, as this would be the only incident of the whole tour!

The final climb from Tavanasa to Obersaxen was steep, but done at a good pace. I arrived at Giraniga before the car drivers... but i had also a key and could already take a shower.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Oberer Mönchhof (Kilchberg)	0	450	
Längimoos	3	510	60
Gattikon	5	470	
Sihlbrugg	15	530	60
Bethlehem	23	740	210
Neuägeri	24	680	
<b>Sattel</b>	37	790	110
Brunnen	50	440	
Tellsplatte	60	510	70
Flüelen	64	430	
Grund (Schattdorf)	68	490	60
Ried (Schattdorf)	70	450	
Amsteg	81	520	70
Wassen	90	920	400
Andermatt	100	1450	530
<b>Oberalppass</b>	111	2040	590
Rueras	121	1400	
Mustér / Disentis	132	1140	
Punt Grondo	136	1030	
Sumvitg	139	1060	30
Tavanasa	148	820	
Giraniga	154	1250	430
<b>total</b>	<b>154</b>		<b>2620</b>



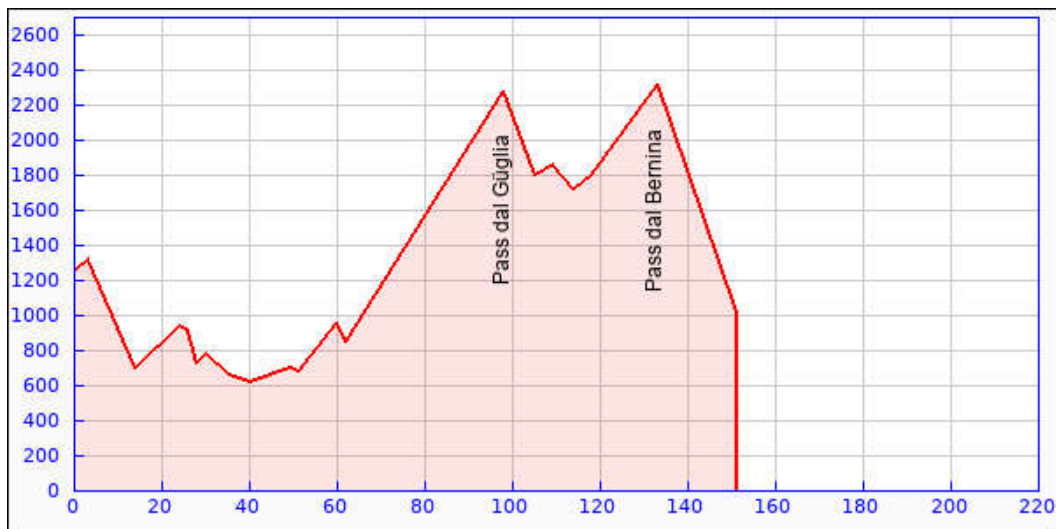
## Stage 2 (16 July 2002): Giraniga - Julier - Bernina - Poschiavo

Even if the first idea was to stay just one day in Obersaxen, the uncertain weather let me wait two more days. Finally, the sun reappeared on Tuesday and i left early in the morning.

Like the first one, the second stage was entirely on roads I already knew from previous tours. The only novelty would be to ride over the [Julier](#) pass from the north, a long climb with flat parts in between. It is during this climb that the sun already disappeared behind clouds. As I reached the pass, rain drops began to fall. It was noon and I decided a pit stop to refuel. Fortunately, the rain was nothing serious and i could ride down to the Engiadina without any problem. The air was just a bit cool.

The next stop was St. Moritz, just to take some euros from a money machine. Then i crossed the valley and climbed towards the [Bernina](#). There were many big trucks on this broad road because of construction works near the small lakes at the pass. And busses because a crack in a railway bridge prevented the train to run. Apart of this, the gentle climb was easy. I was rather early and thus allowed myself a longer pause at the pass, drinking tea and reading newspapers. The descent was easy too, and this was appreciated by my aching right wrist. I stopped at Poschiavo, as planned and after a second stage with actually not much to tell about. I was there already at three in the afternoon. The rain arrived later.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Giraniga	0	1250	
Meierhof	3	1320	70
Ilanz	14	700	
Carnifels (Versam)	24	940	240
Versam	26	910	
Versamer Tobel	28	730	
Zault	30	780	50
Bonaduz	35	660	
Rothenbrunnen	40	620	
Thusis	49	700	80
Sils i. D.	51	680	
Valmala (Alvaschagn)	60	960	280
Tiefencastel	62	850	
<b>Pass dal Güglia</b>	98	2280	1430
Silvaplana	105	1800	
St. Moritz	109	1860	60
Celerina	114	1720	
Pontresina	118	1800	80
<b>Pass dal Bernina</b>	133	2320	520
Poschiavo	151	1020	
<b>total</b>	<b>151</b>		<b>2810</b>



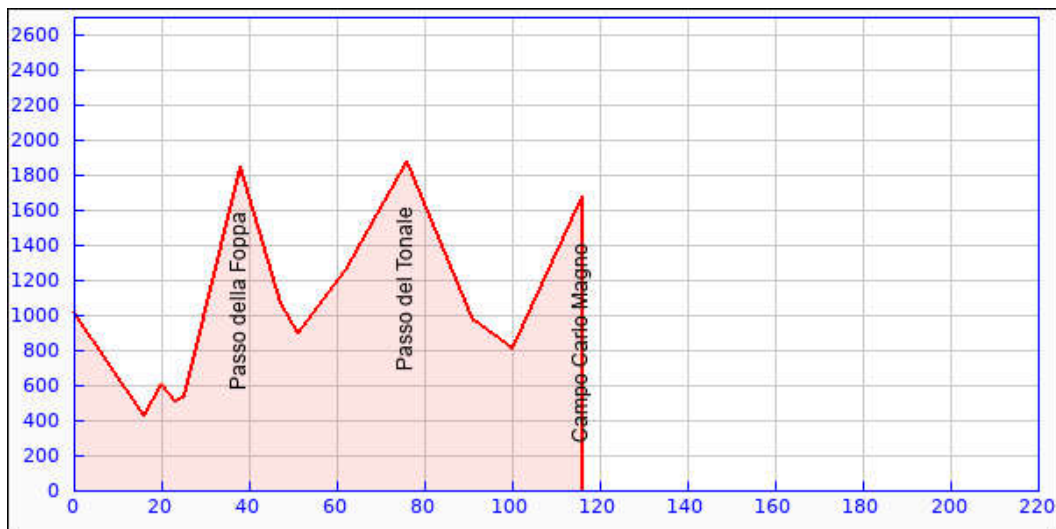
## Stage 3 (17 July 2002): Poschiavo - Foppa - Tonale - Campo Carlo Magno

To start the third stage, i continued along the valley of Poschiavo, riding down to Tirano, in Italy. There, i turned to the east, but soon left the main road, preferring to climb along the orchards of Sernio. Then, after a few kilometres of descent or almost flat roads, i was between Tovo and Mazzo as i saw a road sign towards the first new pass of this tour. Not a piece of cake: the **Foppa**, often also called Mortirolo... actually by a mistake of some 500 m. Climbing from Mazzo, it is very steep, with almost no place to catch breath for kilometres. The Giro d'Italia took that way already several times, as can be seen from the cyclists' names written on the road. If you're not as strong as these guys, a triple crankset may be better. I did it with 39/26, but it was tough! Some cyclists consider this climb as the hardest of the Alps... and i'm not far from sharing this view.

Not far from the pass, the road joins the less steep one from Grosio. I caught up with a group of mountain bikers from Austria. We chatted a bit at the pass and took pictures. I never took my reflex camera for bicycle tours because i fear too much for it because of shocks and humidity. I was therefore glad that one of these cyclists took a digital picture and promised to send it to me. Tanks!

As they went on trails, i continued on the road to Monno, then joined once again the route of my 1997 tour towards Ponte di Legno. The **Tonale** pass was very easy compared to the Mortirolo/Foppa. In the descent, however, it began to rain, remembering me the wet climb i had there in 1999. Fortunately, the shower didn't last and, in spite of wet feet, i didn't really suffer from it. In the Val di Sole, as the name requires it, the sun finally reappeared. Then i took a small shortcut climbing on the right side of the valley and joining the road towards Madonna di Campiglio. This is quite an easy climb, but for me it was the third of the day and it appeared really long. I stopped at **Campo Carlo Magno** (camp of Charlemagne), just after the pass. There are enough hotels in this touristic region, including expansive ones. Again, it began to rain just after my arrival.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Poschiavo	0	1020	
Tirano	16	430	
Sernio	20	610	180
Lovero	23	510	
Mazzo	25	540	30
<b>Passo della Foppa</b>	38	1850	1310
Monno	47	1070	
Incudine	51	900	
Ponte di Legno	62	1260	360
<b>Passo del Tonale</b>	76	1880	620
Fucine	91	970	
Mestriago	100	810	
<b>Campo Carlo Magno</b>	116	1680	870
<b>total</b>	<b>116</b>		<b>3370</b>



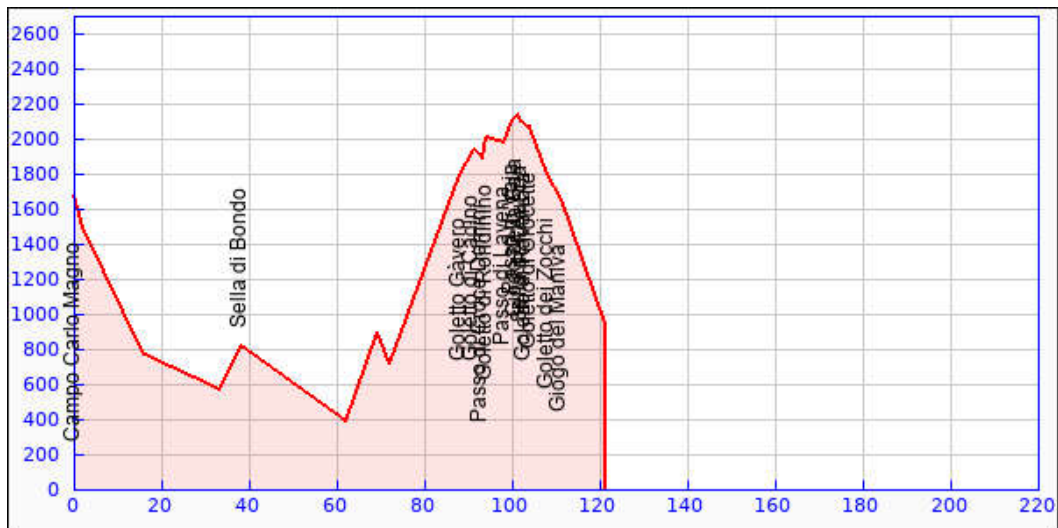
## Stage 4 (18 July 2002): Campo Carlo Magno - Tione - Croce Domini - Maniva - San Colombano

The sun was back as i left for the fourth stage. The first two hours were easy, mostly in descents. There was only a short climb between Tione and Bondo. All the way towards the lake of Idro, however, was on main roads, with a corresponding number of cars and trucks.

Before reaching the lake, i turned right to the small road climbing to Ricomassimo and Cerreto. It was steep, but the chestnut trees kept me mostly in their shade. There was almost no traffic. After a short descent, i reached the town of Bagolino. From there, after a short stop at a grocery store, i went straight north into the Caffaro valley. There, again, i encountered very few cars. The climb was sometimes very steep, sometimes less, but always in nice landscapes. I only worried about the dark clouds forming around the mountains.

After the long climb, i arrived on a ridge with many small summits separated by small valleys and passes. The [Goletto di Cadino](#) was the first of these passes. Even if this would rather be for mountain bikes, i left the road at the [Croce Domini](#) pass, taking a way unpaved for several kilometres. It went up and down over [Giogo della Bala](#) and [Goletto di Crocette](#). From the Dosso dei Galli, it was paved again. But then the thunderstorm burst out. And it was no fun any more. This time, the rain had won the race. It was quickly decided not to try the way towards the Passo delle Pòrtole but to ride after the [Maniva](#) pass directly down to the valley. After a careful descent on the wet road, i arrived completely soaked at San Colombano and stopped there at a cheap but nice little auberge.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
<b>Campo Carlo Magno</b>	0	1680	
Madonna di Campiglio	2	1500	
Pinzolo	16	770	
Tione	33	570	
<b>Sella di Bondo</b>	38	820	250
Lodrone	62	390	
Cerreto	69	900	510
Bagolino	72	720	
<b>Goletto Gàvero</b>	88	1800	1080
<b>Goletto di Cadino</b>	91	1940	140
<b>Passo di Croce Domini</b>	93	1890	
<b>Goletto di Rondinino</b>	94	2010	120
<b>Passo di Lavena</b>	98	1980	
<b>Passo di Vaia</b>	100	2110	130
<b>Giogo della Bala</b>	101	2140	30
<b>Sella dell'Auccia</b>	102	2100	
<b>Goletto di Ravenola</b>	103	2070	
<b>Goletto di Crocette</b>	104	2070	
<b>Goletto dei Zocchi</b>	108	1800	
<b>Giogo del Maniva</b>	111	1660	
San Colombano	121	950	
<b>total</b>	<b>121</b>		<b>2260</b>



## Stage 5 (19 July 2002): San Colombano - Zeno - Presolana - Zambla - Mezzoldo

I didn't sleep well in San Colombano. Nothing to do with the room or the bed, just that i worried about the weather (it was still raining as i went to bed). Fortunately, in the morning, there were still some clouds, but no more rain.

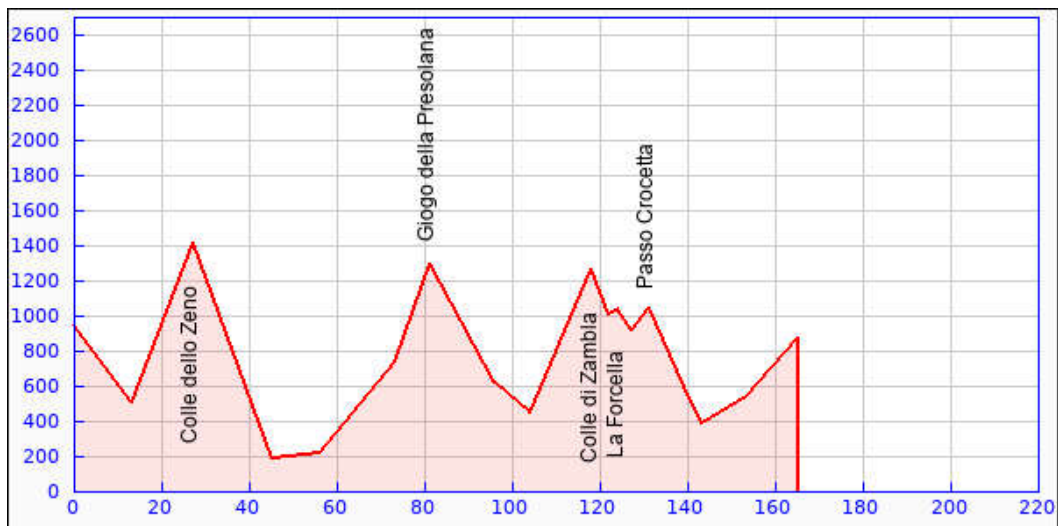
I hit the road at 8. After a few kilometres of descending or flat roads, i arrived at Lavone and turned right, starting to climb to the [Zeno](#) pass. I had doubts about the state of this small road, but it was quite good, at least for this hillside. There was very few traffic, the temperature was ideal and the landscape beautiful. For sure one of the nicest climbs to remember from this tour! There was then a long descent to Pisogne, at the north end of the Iseo lake. The road was often still wet, requiring a careful ride.

After crossing the Oglio river, i was able to catch up with a team of young cyclists on training. I left them later at Corna, as i started to climb to the Moro lake, trying to take a shortcut. Just after the lake, however, there was only a very narrow and extremely steep way up, near 30% slope i'd guess. I joined the normal route into the Valle di Scalve at Ángolo, riding then for some 12 km along a canyon, with several tunnels. The first one was long (about 1.5 km) and without light. I preferred to try the old road along the river. It was abandoned and in bad shape, but still just sufficient to ride with a race bike. The second tunnel was shorter (600 m)

but also unlit and with no alternative route. There was a curve in the middle, and, as i was no longer able to see anything, i had to walk along the wall for a while! I let you imagine what i was thinking about these damned italian tunnels. At least, the third one had light. I also avoided the forth one by taking along the river, but this time it was worse: i even had to climb over fallen rocks or tree trunks, carrying the bike. That was adventure.

I arrived at Dezzo just before noon, just to buy a bottle of lemonade. Then, the road went back, but climbing along the slope of the valley. It became very steep up to the [Presolana](#) pass. The first part of the descent from this pass was good, but then there was much traffic. Just after Nossa, i turned right on a quieter road towards the third pass of the day, [Colle di Zambla](#). Now it was really warm, but the climb was not too hard. After the pass, the road went twice again a bit up and down before i found the small road descending from Dossena to San Giovanni-Bianco. From there, i went north, along the Brembo river. I finally stopped when the slope was getting steeper, at Mezzoldo, the last village in this valley. The stage had been long and i was quite tired.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
San Colombano	0	950	
Collio	3	840	
Lavone	13	510	
<a href="#">Colle dello Zeno</a>	27	1420	910
Pisogne	45	190	
Corna	56	220	30
Dezzo	73	740	520
<a href="#">Giogo della Presolana</a>	81	1300	560
Clusone	96	620	
Nossa	104	450	
<a href="#">Colle di Zambla</a>	118	1270	820
Oltre il Colle	122	1010	
<a href="#">La Forcella</a>	124	1040	30
Valpiana	127	920	
<a href="#">Passo Crocetta</a>	131	1050	130
S. Pietro	139	600	
S. Giovanni Bianco	143	390	
Lenna	153	540	150
Mezzoldo	165	880	340
<b>total</b>	<b>165</b>		<b>3490</b>



## Stage 6 (20 July 2002): Mezzoldo - S. Marco - Splügen - Giraniga

I could not start earlier than 8:30 for the last stage because i did not want to miss the breakfast at the hotel. The road was climbing from the very beginning on. The climb to the [San Marco](#) pass was quite steep and long (1100 m of climbing), but not as steep as the remainings of the Via Priula, the old way built there by the Venetians to join central Europe. There was few traffic and the view over the Alps of the Bergamo province became better and better. From the pass, the view opened also to the north, over the Valtelina.

The descent was even longer than the climb, but the road was not very good, requiring much braking. Arriving down in Morbegno, i crossed the valley and the Adda river to turn west. There was headwind, but i caught up with another cyclist and we could then relay each other. Near the lake of Como, my road turned north to Chiavenna, and the wind was then from behind. There were two tunnels along the lake of Mezzola but, unlike for those of the previous day, a road for bicycles was indicated to avoid them. From Novate, i crossed to the other side of the plain to find a road with fewer traffic. It was already noon as i arrived in sight of Chiavenna, at the south foot of the last pass on my programme. Last but not least: the [Splügen/Spluga](#). In 1995, as i was coming the other way, i found the descent very long and steep; now i had to climb it, from about 300 to 2100 m! In the middle of a long stage, i preferred to take my time, making several stops to drink, eat,

and look at the landscape (including some breathtaking steep and narrow hairpin curves). Most of the climb was in the sun and i sweat a lot before reaching the small lake and finally the pass and the border.

Then came the reward of a very beautiful descent (from the landscape as well as from the perfect state of the road). Once in Splügen village, i expected headwinds... which didn't fail to brake me along the flat parts of the valley. I reached Thusis after the beautiful descents in the Rofla and Via Mala canyons. The loop of the tour was thus closed, but i still had about 50 km to go.

It was 7 o'clock as i finally arrived in Obersaxen, after the last climb from Ilanz. I had been exactly 9 hours on saddle, certainly one of the hardest rides i've ever done in one day. As i arrived at the chalet, the sauna was already hot, but i went in only for ten minutes: i had already transpired enough. I was obviously glad to see again my girlfriend Catrina after these 5 days... and to be able to tell her that the whole tour had been without accident or technical problem. Just an aching neck that i was bringing back from this tour, but along with good memories.

	distance (km)	altitude (m)	climbing (m)
Mezzoldo	0	880	
<a href="#">Cola di Ancogno</a>	10	1750	870
<a href="#">Passo di San Marco</a>	13	1990	240
Morbegno	39	240	
Verceia	57	200	
Chiavenna	76	330	130
Cimaganda	85	900	570
Pianazzo	95	1390	490
Monte Spluga	104	1920	530
<a href="#">Splügenpass</a>	107	2110	190
Splügen	117	1460	
Sufnersee	123	1400	
Andeer	134	980	
Thusis	141	720	
Rothenbrunnen	150	620	
Bonaduz	155	660	40
Versam	163	910	250
Ilanz	175	700	
Affeier	185	1300	600
Giraniga	190	1250	
<b>total</b>	<b>190</b>		<b>3910</b>

