

Passed on the TdF (3hr drive each way; too far); did the Col de la Morte instead.
And cooked in the sun again!



Yes, it really was 101.8 degrees. What's missing is the stiff headwind we were fighting at the time.



Any real Star Trek fan should appreciate the dedication on this memorial. ST:Voyager anyway.

Today's original plan had been to see the Tour de France stage finish, or something near the stage finish, in Pra Loup. But the combination of a 3 hour drive each way, plus forecasts of "serious" thunderstorms, turned us away from that plan. Well, not so much "us" as me. Kevin was still ready to see the TdF, but then Kevin wouldn't be the person driving. He'd be asleep in the car virtually the whole way, while Dad's getting stressed driving winding mountain roads and hoping to find a parking place. Kevin kinda sorta understood the logic of that, so we settled for a nice little local ride.



The view from just half-way up the Col de la Morte. Still a long way to go!

Today, this mountain pass lived up to it's name. It's not the steepest mountain we've climbed, not by far. At "just" a 6.6% average grade, you won't even likely need your lowest gear. Nor is it the longest, at "just" 15 kilometers (just over 9 miles). But it's continuous, it was a very hot day (so there's the added stress of wondering if your bottles will last all the way to the top), and there were lots of little junk climbs preceding it that took you down a notch or two.

But it is very pretty; mostly tree-covered (not too many great views but you're thankful for the shade), and there are a couple places

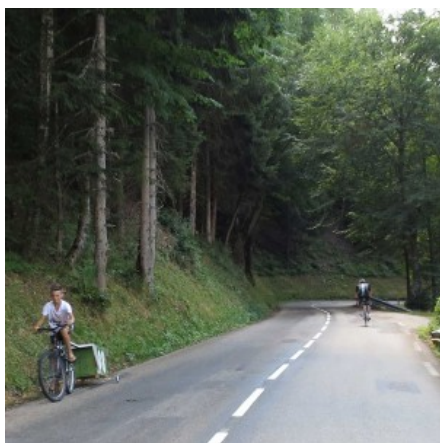
at the top where you can buy a coke. Or two.



Rare photo because it includes not just Kevin but myself as well, at the summit.

What's not pretty is getting there. Getting out of and into Grenoble by bike, in any direction but down the river (kinda South?) means dealing with endless stop lights, confusing bike lanes that become bus lanes, and pretty choppy pavement. Grenoble itself is very popular with "lifestyle" bikes (people who use them to get around or just like to feel the breeze in their hair, you know, riding a bike because it's fun?) and I suppose it all works very well for them. But higher-performance bikes on bad pavement at decent speed aren't all that much fun, and you deal with that both coming and going. A real shame, because Grenoble is surrounded by incredible mountain roads!

On the return we actually modified the planned ride a bit, navigating to the Vizille train station about 10 miles from Grenoble, in hopes of hitching a ride the remaining distance. Unfortunately we missed the train by about 15 minutes, and, since they run every two hours, it made sense to just keep riding. And that we did, into the previously-mentioned nasty headwind and high temperatures and bumpy pavement.



This photo worth clicking on to enlarge. You had to be there to see it. That kid rocked!

Oh, right, I left something out. As Kevin and I were descending the Col de la Morte and feeling pretty good about our effort, we see this young kid pedaling a mountain bike, pulling a trailer behind, a home-made sort of trailer with what looked like training wheels. And he was smiling, having a great time, heading up the road. Unbelievable!

Tomorrow we WILL see the 'Tour, on the Lacets de Montvernier, a sort of ultra-compact version of the Alpe d'Huez with a lot of switchbacks packed into just a few miles. Except... oh my... just did some last-second research and it appears they're not going to

allow any fans... at all... on that section of road! Yikes. I've been looking forward to this since I heard about its inclusion in the Tour de France. It's [worth viewing this video](#) to see what all the fuss is about. Looks like I need to start working on yet-another Plan-B! Kevin gets to sleep; Dad gets to stay up late trying to plan. And yet this is something I look forward to, year after year.
--Mike--