

2.5 hour drive to Lyon ends up being 5+... oh yeah, that was fun...



"Va Slovak" preceded by La Marseillaise, sung in Slovakian. Wished I had it on video! The day was looking to have few redeeming qualities to it about the time we FINALLY pulled up to our hotel in Lyon. Several spots of near stop & go on the French Superhighway between Avignon & Lyon and then, once in Lyon, ohmygosh... over an hour spent traveling about a mile. It was one of the few times I was thinking gee, an automatic wouldn't have been so bad after all. Once actually on city streets it was another 30 minutes trying to find a way to get to a gas station you could see, but the maze of one-way streets, always seeming to go the wrong way, conspired against you actually getting there.

And we had a schedule to keep. The car needed to be returned by 3pm, and at 2pm, we were still wandering around trying to find the hotel, the hotel that's supposed to be right across from the train station. Well, about that... it is right across from the station, but we were on the wrong side of the tracks. Doh! When we finally found it, the dread of trying to figure out where to return the rental car to was magically erased at the same time, as Sixt has a parking lot right behind the very hotel we're in (Ibis Styles).

From that point on, things started going quickly in the right direction. First, this is a VERY nice hotel. Much nicer than you'd expect in a major city for about \$100/night. Second, very nice staff. No problem validating the parking in their garage while we unloaded (you don't get free parking in hotel parking garages in France). And the wifi here? It actually works.

The plan (remember? There's always a plan) was to try and intercept the Tour de France by taking a local train after checking in and heading out about 20 miles or so. Of course, by the time we got checked in and settled, it was 10 minutes past the last train that would get there in time. However, logging onto the race reports, it turned out they were 20 minutes behind the slowest published times, which meant... if we took the next train... we should actually get there before the race! Which we did. For whatever reason we didn't get any decent photos, despite being in what seemed like a prime location, on a corner with the sun facing into the riders.

On the other hand, how often do you get to hear a bunch of Slovaks sing La Marseillaise (the French national anthem), in Slovakian, and draw the attention of Peter Sagan's support car, which pulled over to hear them? Peter Sagan is, of course, the Slovakian star of Tinkoff's team. It was pretty cool.



The Tour de France cooperated nicely and came through leaving us just enough time to make it back for the next train into town (3 minutes to spare), after which Kevin crashed for a bit (slept, not his bike), and later we had a great dinner. Amazingly, even got 4, yes FOUR ice cubes in our drinks! Normally 2 is the limit in France. Good pizza too.

Tomorrow it's another local train, this time to Culoz, an hour to the north, where we'll scale the Col du Grand Comumbier and wait for the race to come through, one final time on this trip. Then back to the hotel, pack the bikes, and pretend it's possible to sleep for a few hours before a ridiculously-early 5:50am train to Paris CDG airport and fly home. It will be good to be home. We're ready. But one more day on a mountain, this time, with the previously-absurd hope that Trek's Bauke Mollema is in contention for a final podium spot. --Mike--