

## A long way to the top, but we got there!



Why is the Tour de France so different, so special compared to all other bike races? What compels some of us like moths to a fly to travel thousands of miles to a mountain top like this? It wasn't easy getting to the Izoard, but it didn't have to be. Advance information pointed to limited access to the mountain and a complete closure of the backside, so Larry and I left early enough to try to get to the side the race was climbing. That plan didn't work. Briançon was totally slammed with cars and the police had already shut down the roads you could use to get to the base of the climb. Unfortunately, we thought we spotted a loophole... a tiny little road shown on either Apple or Google Maps, don't recall which.



One to make Kevin jealous- he likes to get the reflections in the sunglasses. Nailed this one! That tiny little road bypassed the closed arteries and reconnected to the highway outside of town. Or so we thought. We drove our rental down that tiny, very steep, single-lane road, with cars parked on one side and a wall on the other, only to get almost to the bottom and discover three other cars had the same idea... and found the road blocked. No exit. Imagine backing up a stick shift car in those conditions. It's worse. We had a seriously-smoking clutch but somehow got the car out of that hole in one piece.

We decided what the heck, let's try the backside, it can't really be shut down. Or hopefully. But first we went back into town to see the actual stage start, which was actually pretty cool. After that we drove a couple miles out of town to find a place to park, got on our bikes and voila, joined literally THOUSANDS of other cyclists doing the exact same thing! The road wasn't closed to cyclists, just cars, and it was a great ride on a really nice day.

Larry found a place 120 meters from the finish and took a zillion photos, mostly of hands and cameras people put in between his camera and the riders, but he did get a great shot of a very happy & relaxed-looking Warren Barguil, the stage winner. I did something very unusual and hung out above the finish line, actually watching the riders come through instead of trying to take lots of photos.

On a personal note, there have been no issues regarding my cycling and the chemo drug they've got me on, despite expectations otherwise. It does cause a lot of itching, but Allegra seems to take care of that. Which of course I ran out of! Fortunately lots of pharmacies in France, so I'm itching to pick some up tomorrow. Also, had Kevin been with me this year, I think I would have surprised him, riding much stronger than he would have expected. --MikeJ