

Odds not looking good, but hoping this dream becomes real- France 2024

With the staffing issues at the shop (tough finding employees, and Karen's not likely to be able to work much) and Karen's health in general (Stage 4 cancer doesn't go away on its own), and money (wasn't expecting a \$4000 co-pay for Karen's first immunology treatment, plus at some point I have a \$6000 tooth repair I've been putting off), it seems crazy to think France this year is a thing.

But, Karen's doing pretty darned well, Becky's working on finding some employees, and using miles, I can do pretty well on the flights. Best of all, using miles, I can cancel at any time without losing anything. Complete refund of miles & fees.

So... here's the CRAZY plan.

Fly Thursday July 11th SFO to CDG (Paris).

Friday July 12th Arrive Paris, bus from airport to Montparnasse train station, train to Toulouse. Arrive about 5pm. Check into hotel in Toulouse for three nights (12th, 13th & 14th)

Saturday July 13th. Build bikes in the morning, do a local 30 mile ride to get the legs moving and test the bikes.

Sunday July 14th. Take the local train from Toulouse to Foix, then ride up the final climb of the TdF's last stage in the Pyrenees. Thankfully trains run every hour late into the evening, so no heavy pressure getting off the mountain in time to catch the final train back to Toulouse.

Monday July 15th. Ugh. Have to re-box the bikes (doesn't look like we can get onto trains that allow bikes that aren't boxed), then take the train to either Gap or Grenoble. Still working out which. Would be nice to go straight to Gap, in the Alps, but we might not be able to rent a car large enough that we wouldn't have to re-pack the bikes on a nearly-daily basis. So assume Grenoble, where we can rent something like a Renault Kangoo.

Tuesday July 16th. Local ride in the Grenoble area. Lots of great choices for that.

Wednesday July 17th. We catch up to the 'Tour again! It's likely we'd be renting the car in the morning (in Grenoble) and driving to Gap. Driving would be about 65 miles, 2 hours or so. If we have a Kangoo, we'd be leaving our luggage in the car. Ride to the race (a small uphill finish about 20 miles from Gap), ride back to the car, and then drive to Barcelonette. That's about 40 miles, maybe an 1 hour, 15 minute drive. Not too bad. Check into hotel in Barcelonette, where we'll be staying 17, 18th & 19th I think?

Thursday, July 18th. The race actually finishes in Barcelonette, where we'll be staying, so we can do a local ride and then find a place near the finish for pictures. There is a mild climb about 8 miles out of town that we can scout out as a possible place for photos.

Friday, July 19th. This is the BIG day for us, the massive climb up the Cime de la Bonette. Looks amazing! And oh my goodness, I just realized it's only 35k from Barcelonette, so a no-driving day!!! Yay!

Saturday, July 20th. This is a really strange day for the TdF; it starts in Nice, at the Mediterranean, and heads back towards us. We will be packing up and leaving our hotel (but without having to disassemble the bikes, providing we have the Kangoo) and drive about two hours (55 miles) to the base of the stages BIG climb. The plan of course is to ride to the top! By far our most-challenging day. Afterwards, we ride back down to the car, and drive to Nice. Not as far as I'd thought- 40 miles, worst case an hour and a half of driving. Check into hotel in Nice.

Sunday, July 21st. The 'Tour finishes in Nice this year, with a time trial. Two good climbs that we'll check out. After the finish we pack up the bikes and get ready to depart the next day.

Monday, July 22nd. 1:10pm flight out of Nice, connection in Newark, arrive home about 9pm Monday night.

I had thought this 'Tour was an absolute disaster, logistically, but it's beginning to make sense to me.