

So much to do, so little time. TdF trip just 6 weeks away. Have to get in some challenging rides!

It's hard to believe the trip to the 'Tour is actually happening, but everything started coming into place very rapidly, once we got the favorable news from Karen's cancer scan. Heck, the new shortened version of our trip (3 days shorter than normal, just 8 instead of 11) has Kevin and I gone during an "off" week for Karen's chemo sessions... could not have planned it better, and a total coincidence, not something that could have really been worked around.

And Karen had another wonderful chemo session today at Kaiser, relaxing in her chair as two different chemical poisons were pumped into her... and, as previously, it almost seems to energize her later in the evening. Any sort of chemo letdown happens several days later, and when it does, it's not nearly as bad as I recall from her prior bouts with cancer and chemo. The only new unfortunate thing is that she is losing her hair, in a very slow and frustrating manner. Slow enough that you almost wonder if it's actually happening, but over time, you can tell it is. Doesn't bother me; thin or regular hair, she looks beautiful. But she's getting to the point where she doesn't want to keep thinking about it and will have the remaining hair shaved.

Another new complication is with my mom; her Hodgkins Lymphoma has returned so she'll likely be undergoing radiation treatment soon. While Kevin and I are gone the shop is going to be pretty short staffed so my brother Steve won't be able to take her, but Karen should be able to. It's such a far cry from back in January, when Karen was so bad off we wondered if she would ever be driving a car again.

OK, so now that France is happening, I don't have much time to get in shape. Many challenging rides have been changed to something more-favorable to Kevin's messed-up right knee; he goes in to see a doctor next Thursday. So I'm getting slower and... a bit heavier. Some of the weight is because I've been eating stuff I normally wouldn't, things that Karen is now encouraged to eat to keep her weight up (ice cream, cake, cookies...). Until late March, Karen had been losing 1.5 pounds each week!!! That's when it finally stabilized and I'll do anything, including sacrifice my own diet, to encourage her to eat. Anything. Anytime. So instead of being 162 I'm up at 167 and not liking that at all.

OK, back to France. With three fewer days, we have to make every hour count. No opportunity for a fun non-cycling day like we had last year in MontBlanc/Chamonix. I've rearranged our incoming flights more than once, looking to get into Grenoble as early as possible. Initially we were going to fly into Geneva and take two trains to Grenoble, arriving about 5pm. New itinerary has us flying into Lyon instead, with a high-speed direct TGV that goes straight from the Lyon airport to Grenoble, arriving about 3pm, an extra two hours to get settled in, build the bikes and get out for a quick test ride.

The place we're staying is new (to us), an apartment hotel literally across the street from the Grenoble train station. Yay! It's not going to be as nice as our usual place, but it's only for two nights, and just three blocks from our usual place so it's not like we're going to have to learn a new neighborhood. Our favorite Kebob place will be a 10 minute walk instead of 3... I think we'll survive.

I've mapped out a very ambitious ride for the next day, our only ride day that won't involve a 'Tour intercept. We'll be revisiting one of my all-time favorite rides in France, the cliff road opposite Alpe d'Huez, and doing a loop across the top that involves about 3 miles of gravel. The gravel part is questionable for our Bike Fridays; the tires just aren't all that tough. I'm giving some consideration to outfitting some tougher, heavier, not-as-fast riding tires which we'd use for that ride alone, and then switch to the nicer tires for the rest of the trip.

I should also be rebuilding and checking out everything on our Bike Fridays sooner than later. They've been through a lot, handling over 10 trips to France for each, and it would be better to discover now that we need to consider replacing a worn-out rim than later, since 451 diameter wheels aren't terribly easy to get. I've already replaced the front wheel on mine, whose sidewall was worn dangerously-thin.