

Feel like I could be riding faster!

It's getting a bit frustrating; for the first time in ages, I've been feeling like I've got the ability to push harder on the climbs, air it out a bit, but it wouldn't be kind to put any distance between myself and people I ride with who normally would leave me in the dust on a longer climb. I can't maintain a hard pace for a long time, since I run out of air (maybe, finally, getting that looked into mid-December), but the legs do feel like they want to go. But ex-pilot, who's retired (and thus "ex"-pilot), has been putting in daily rides and is sometimes a bit run down on Tuesday & Thursday-mornings.

I was telling Kevin (ex-pilot) on this morning's ride how I had been thinking, been a bit concerned really, that the 2024 trip to France might have been the last, because I was running out of what it takes to get up the big climbs. But that's not how it played out. We had a few challenging rides and I held up fine, even on the ultra-gnarly Col de la Bonette.

Of course, any sense of progress comes crashing to a halt shortly, when I'm off the bike for 2+ weeks, on vacation with Karen (my wife), a non-cycling vacation traveling to Amsterdam for a day, then train to Paris (was supposed to be for two days but there's a just-announced train strike that requires we move things forward a day) and then a 9 day cruise ending in Barcelona. This is a trip that didn't seem all that likely to happen at the time I put things together, as we just didn't have a good feeling about where Karen's Stage IV cancer was going to go. I booked it about as late as I could (August, for a mid-November cruise... people typically book their cruises about a year ahead of time, sometimes more!) and navigated the myriad of rules regarding travel insurance that might apply, and not, based on Karen's cancer. But now, just 9 days away from flying to Amsterdam, things are looking really good. Karen had a Cat Scan last week that showed no progression, and it was read by the amazing interventional pulmonologist (who saved her life last January) who concurred that her lungs were looking good and there was no need for him to perform another clean-up of her airways.

Staying on the cancer stuff, it's tough interrupting treatment that has clearly kept her alive. You worry about what's going to happen without treatment for a month. You try to rationalize things, as in, maybe the body needs a break from toxic chemical so it can endure another year of treatment. We're literally praying that's the case; we don't want to go into the next scan and see things not-so-good and be thinking we shouldn't have gone on vacation!