

INDY JURA ROUTE

Riding Day 1

Geneva to

Kilometers: 65

Lac de Joux

Meters of climbing: 950

DAY 01

Back in 2001 I did my first overnight bike ride in Europe. I did it on a florescent yellow Team Fuji Litespeed that my distributor friend Tim sold me at cost. I still have it. I could sell it for 500 chf, but I hope instead to mount it on a wall someday.

That first trip was in October and I still remember what I wore: a pair of Carhart shorts that I still wear regularly and some Timberland hiking shoes. My overnight provisions were in a bike trunk that attached to a seatpost rack. It was just one night.

I knew where I was heading, but I hadn't been there before. That was exactly the point, of course. I had just left a long relationship a few months before. I didn't have the courage to just get up and leave. I had to bribe myself: *break up and then buy yourself a bike. You'll go off in those mountains over there and ride around. You'll eat at little restaurants, drink more than you should and fall hard asleep with a fat book.*

That's what I did. That's how I remember it. That's what you're doing today. Mind you, my first ride was NOT the Jura Loop. It was the first DAY of the Jura loop.

Things start getting hard once you turn north, but just remember: I was wearing hiking boots and had only two chain rings. You'll be fine. Still, be warned: you've got about 10km of a 10% grade that begins not far out of Nyon. But once that's done, you're up. Then you will be on a wide crest of pastureland and forest that is officially called (no joke) the Canton of Vaud Jurassic Park. So watch out ! Nay...but you could very well see falcons on fence posts and lynx on tree branches.

Quiet, isn't it ? It should be. Hardly anyone lives up here. That said, the landscape has been profoundly shaped by civilization for hundreds (maybe 1000s ?) of years. People have been harvesting the forests and grazing animals up here for a long time. Notice all the pastureland ? See all of those stone walls and mysterious livestock pens ? But where is everyone ? If it's a foggy day, things can be downright spooky.

Soon you'll be coasting down into the Valley de Joux (named after the lake you'll soon see). It's an unassuming valley. The towns are small and sleepy: Le Brassus, Le Sentier, Le Lieu, l'Abbaye. Unless there is a village party going on, these places might seem like ghost towns. Then, you may be sipping a beer on a rickety terrace in Le Sentier and see a Bentley or some similarly exotic car. You'll then wonder aloud: "What do they do up here?". I was hoping you'd ask. That's an easy one. They make watches ! Expensive watches !

AudemarsPiguet, Blancpain, PatekPhillipe, VacheronConstantin: they are all up here . And yes, some people do come up here in order to buy a watch on the premises. A typical client flies in from an oil-rich country, visits the workshops and their craftsmen, examines diamonds and gold, and then if all goes well, places a work order for a 500,000 chf watch. That's about the starting price for something unique.

So, don't try to impress the waiter with your Rolex at supper.

Speaking of supper...you'll likely want to eat at your hotel, as there is nothing else nearby. It's a lovely 3-star hotel directly on the lake. It's not where I stayed back in 2001, but you shouldn't mind that.

There has been a hotel on this spot since 1883, and the current owners (theLeuenbergers) are very proud of the fact that only 4 other owners have preceded them. They are also quite proud of their fish, (most of which comes from the lake), so perhaps we should try that?