

## ALPINE ROUTE

Chatel →

Distance: 97 kilometers

Gruyère

Climbing: 1,660 meters

DAY

3

Towns: Aigle, Montbovon,  
Grandvillard

## Highlights

**Experience the Tour D'Ai and other peaks up close.**

**Follow the same route that cheese-makers have been using for centuries.**

**Discover the medieval town of Gruyères.**

**Eat cheese fondue.**

This morning we have another hundred meters of climbing to reach the summit and then it's a long 1000 meter hairpin descent to the town of Monthey and the valley below.

You're back in Switzerland and will soon be in Aigle, the home to the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale), the world's governing body for cycling. The mountains here are the playground of the many elite athletes that come to visit.

You've now got our second toughest climb of the trip. Aigle is at 415 meters and within the next hour or so will be ascending to 1500 meters! Take a look at our goal: the towering mountains immediately north. We're standing too close to see the top. Make sure to fill your water bottles and put sunscreen on. We will pass through some very small mountain villages and see a café or two while ascending, but don't count on anything being open. Perhaps take an energy bar or two as you will not be seeing a place to stop for calories before lunch.

This quiet road has been a trade route for over 2000 years. Not long ago, dairy farmers from nearby Gruyères would take these same paths to Lake Geneva carrying 35-kg wheels of cheese. We will go through a few tunnels that have been cut through the stone. Be careful. Get through the tunnels quickly, as cars or cyclists may be coming from the opposite direction. Once on top you will see the "Tour d'Ai" to your right. There are water troughs for the animals up here, so fill your bottles and get off the bikes for a stretch. Take a short walk to the west (perhaps 50 meters) to see Lake Geneva far beneath you.

## ALPINE ROUTE - Day 3

It's eerily quiet up here. You may see other cyclists, a few shepards or the occasional Swiss soldier on patrol, (there is an army barracks up here). Lake Hongrin is actually a reservoir that is used for hydro-electricity.

The route after Lake Hongrin is not 100% paved. You will run into gravel and so should get off your bike and walk down the steep grades. Dark forest roads and creeks cut through rock. You don't want to have an accident around here. Mountain bikers often come from the other direction, so be careful.

We usually have lunch a bit off the route at nearby "La Lecherette" ski station. See picnic table on the GPS.

You will eventually see civilization. This village of Monbovon is the first in a string dedicated to dairy farming and the manufacturing of Gruyère cheese. Notice the stone bridge going over the river Saane ? It's been around since 1667, helping cheese makers get their goods to the lake's bassin.

The village of Lessoc is a nice stop. Even if everything is closed, the fountain in the center of town is likely to be gurgling water ? If it's a hot day, jump in.

We're now riding through a beautiful valley with round mountains and hills to your west.

You'll see the medieval village of Gruyère in the distance and continue to have great views from the comfort of your hotel room. You should take time to walk through the old town, visit the castle, follow the ramparts and have a drink at the "Alien Bar"\*.

If you're still looking for some extra cycling, then bike up to the small village of Moleson above Gruyere. It's 5.5 kilometers up with 375 meters of ascent. They make the famous Gruyère cheese the traditional way up here twice daily: with a log fire and a giant cauldron.

*\* HR Giger was an influential Swiss artist who did a lot of work for Hollywood including the design of the monster in "Alien". He acquired the Chateau St. Germain (Gruyères) in the 90s and the top floor now houses a permanent Giger collection. The HR Giger bar is attached to the chateau and its interior was designed by the artist. The bar is closed on Mondays.*