

The Shakies do France!!!

Whew, I'm not sure how to put into words 9 weeks of playtime! I guess the best part for us was the 2 ½ weeks we spent riding in the Alps then the TDF.

So...to the Alps it is then. We stayed in a fantastic wee French town called Bourg D'Oisans, it had been recommended to us by some like minded friends so we knew we were in with a winner.

The first day we arrived we couldn't contain our excitement; we were camped at the bottom of Alpe D'Huez! And if you sat in the swimming pool (as we often did), you could see riders going up the hill.

So began our days of bliss, we slept, road, ate and cruised by the pool. Needless to say it was pretty cool to feel our strength start to come, a feeling I had never felt before to this extent, and it was awesome. It also pushed our limits to what we thought we could cope with – a recovery ride still had 1000m of climbing in it and we found this easy!!

It wasn't all roses though and our first ascent of the mighty Alpe D'Huez humbled us both. We got there but boy did we grovel in the progress. Needless to say the smile on my face as I looked back down at the amazing view and the switchbacks was huge!

We did this 2 weeks later again and the difference in our bodies was huge, the strength we had gained from riding aerobically nonstop was massive and this ascent was so much more enjoyable (and quicker).

There are so many amazing rides we did, that I would put you to sleep if I mentioned them all - but the Galibier was one that I have to tell you about. The night before I couldn't sleep because I was so excited about the next day and riding to 2600m in height! The day started foggy and really cloudy, this cleared as we were riding to Lautaret (2000m and on the way to Galibier), it was like someone opened the curtains to one of the best shows on earth, amazing craggy peaks with this beautiful glacier, and below green hills and pastures with rivers flowing through.

The ride to Lautaret was such a nice gradient and you ticked along without realizing it. When we turned to ride the road up to the mighty giant I felt the sharp thrill of excitement again. It was so cool to climb and climb and see the views below. To start with you were surrounded by wildflowers of all colours on the side of the road, but the higher you climbed the more barren it got, until it was just shingle and the odd bit of ice.

In no time at all it seemed we were at the top so had to take the obligatory photos then descend the other side to climb back up it, so we said we had done both ways! This was longer and a bit harder but still so stunning; you could forget your pain every time you looked around you.

Every time I look at the photos or remember the rides, I smile and feel like I am back there. Needless to say we are saving our pennies so we can go back and play once again!!