

By bike through France

Van Vissenaken naar het zuiden van Frankrijk

August – September 2018

August 24, 2018

Vissenaken. Getting ready. My outfit for the next few weeks...



August 25, 2018

Vissenaken. Ready to go! My way of transport for the next two weeks. Destination: my sister [Nele Vandermeulen](#) who lives in the South of France, Pyrenees, and who runs a small ecological [Camping El Manau](#): beautiful place, have a look!

1400 kilometers: 100km per day. Wish me luck. I think I might need it 😊



August 26

Day 1: Givet, on the river Meuse/Maas, just across the border in France. My first 105 kilometers. I have been following the Meuse for most of the day and will do so the next few days as well. Nice way of crossing the Ardennes without much climbing.

The tent, Nordisk, is a beautiful example of excellent product design. Fits two people (so I can fit my luggage) and weighs only 950 grammes. Thank you friends for this great birthday present!



August 27

Day 2: Sedan : 113 km

The 'difficult' second day was not so difficult to start with. No muscle aches in the morning 🖐️ went to bed at dusk and up at dawn. Nice rhythm I might try to keep. 😊

But there was rain in the air all day and this together with a pretty strong headwind and the extra kilometers made it quite heavy. Luckily they forecast better weather tomorrow.

Sedan is quite a nice town on the Meuse/Maas, mostly known for its fort which is among the biggest in France. Nice campsite as well on the banks of the river.



August 28

Day 3: Verdun: 105km.

The cycling path following the river ended after about 20km so the route took me through small villages and country roads. Beautiful! A welcome change after two days of following the river. Quite hilly of course. The road took me along old battlefields and cemeteries of WW1. Where hundred thousands died. A reminder of the uselessness and the human waste of war. Never to forget...

I ended in Verdun. I have one day rest here. They forecast really bad weather tomorrow and I feel myself rest is welcome. My bike also needs some repairs. So that was an easy decision.



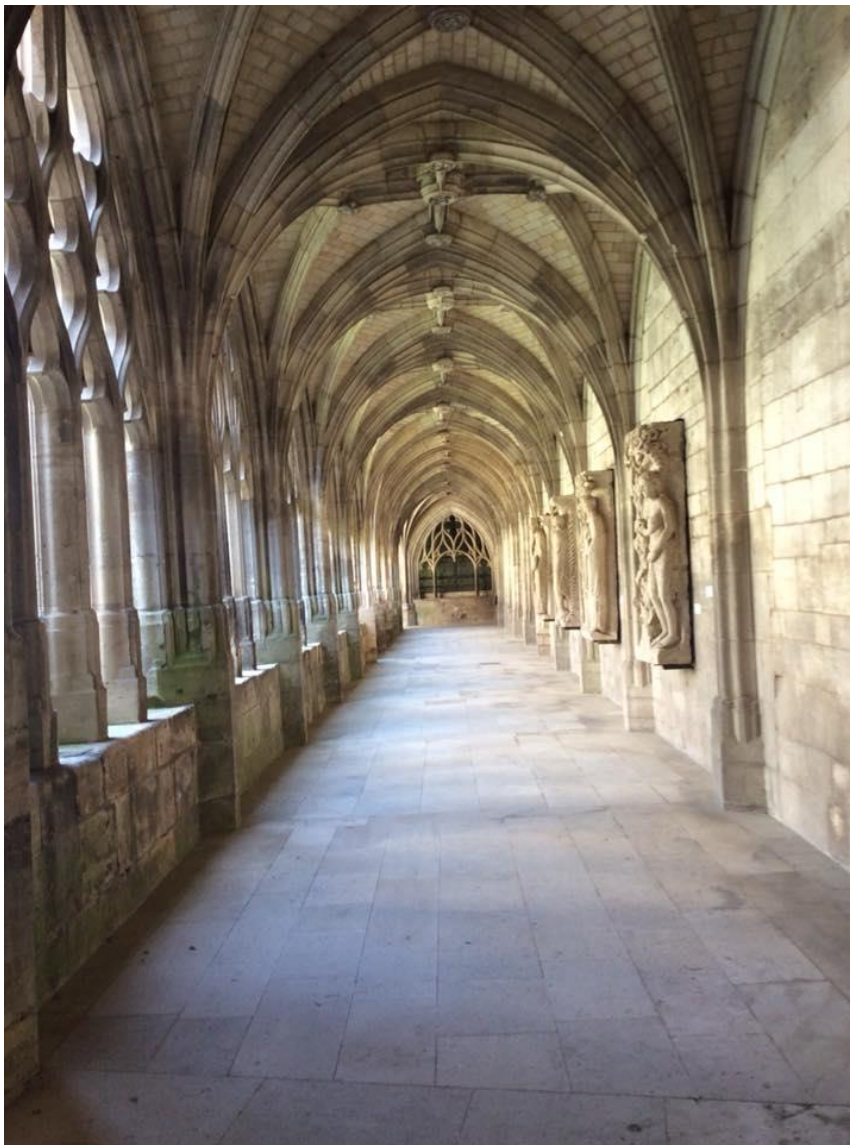
August 29

Day 4: Verdun

Day of rest. Bike fixed. Needed a new rear wheel... keep fingers crossed for the rest of the journey.

I met the first fellow bike travelers. One Belgian guy who started in Ypres and is following the WW1 battle lines until Basel. An American couple who are crisscrossing France and Germany looking for their roots. And a German man who started on the Belgian seaside, followed the North Sea shore until Mont St Michel and is now returning to Koln where he lives. He is already 13 weeks travelling by bike. Hey, I am only a beginner! 😊

The picture is from Verdun Cathedral. Beautiful town, worth a visit.

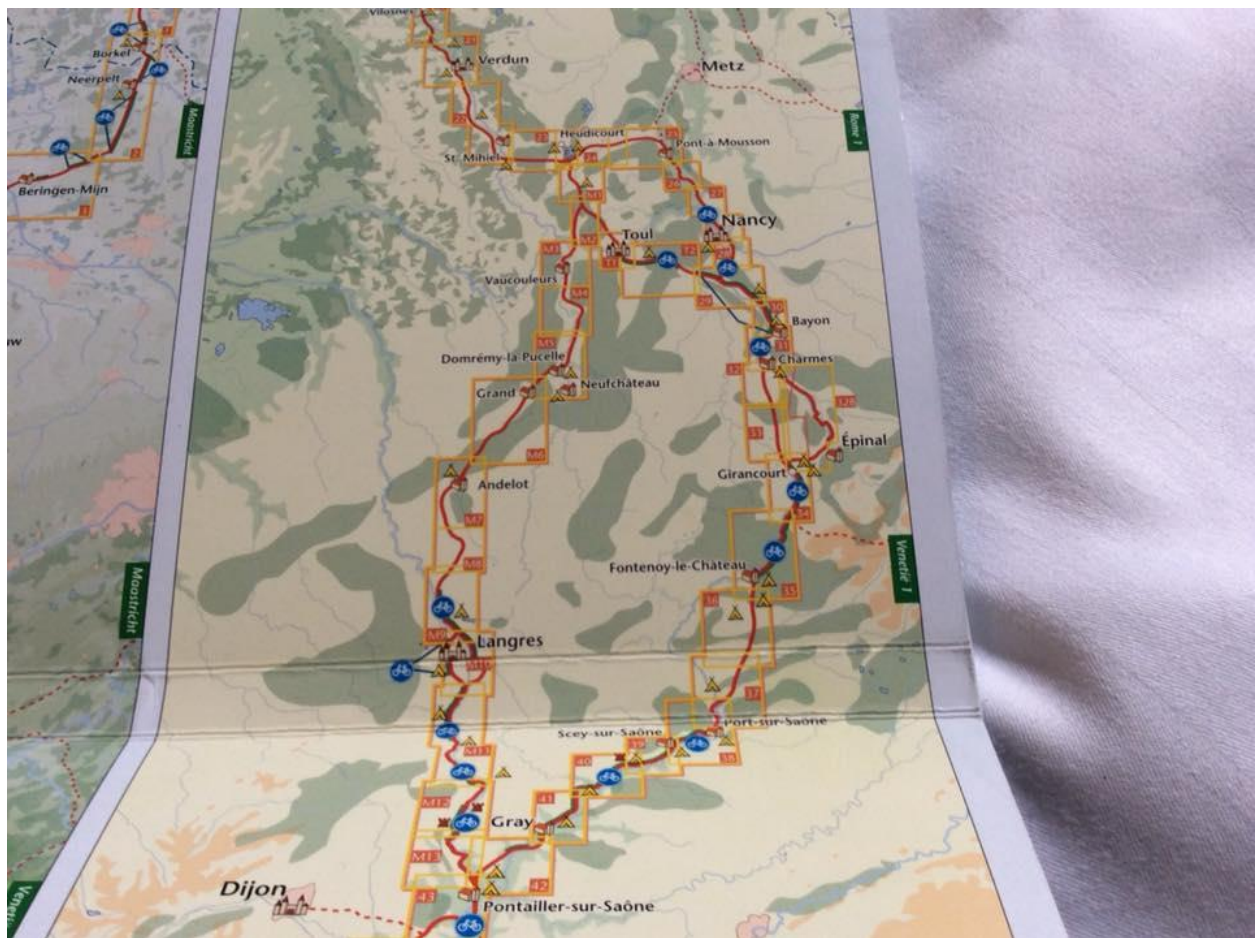


August 30

Day 5: Vaucouleurs

Today I was flying. 😊 Was it the day of rest? Maybe. Was it the new wheel? I don't think so. But it definitely was the tailwind! Can I please have some more north west wind over the next few days! Also did my first col, probably 5th category in the Tour de France or not even considered a col, and it went better than expected.

The picture is the map of my cycling routes for the next days. I am following a guide book called 'Cycling from Amsterdam to Barcelona'. absolutely recommended!



August 31

Day 6: Humes (near Langres): 120km

I left this morning under a grey sky, still following the valley of the Meuse which has become very wide resulting in beautiful scenery. Remarkable: the old churches in the often very empty villages are build with the same 'mergel' stone as the churches in the Maas region where I grew up.

Than the landscape started changing and for the last bit I was following the canal Champagne-Bourgogne. Sounds good! 🍷🍷

It means I definitely left the nord of France. 😊

Picture: 'on the road' lunch 😊



September 1st

Day 7: Pontailler-sur-Saone

It was a really cold night. Everything was wet and misty so I quickly packed my things, had a croissant and a coffee at the local boulanger and got on my bike. Half hour later the sun was shining, my first really sunny day! ☀️

I was following the canal 'de Champagne a Bourgogne' which is the new touristy name for the canal 'Marne - Saone'. From a river going north to a river going south. At the end of the day the canal ended indeed in the Saone, on which banks I am camping now.

Picture: my 10am breakfast spot on the canal. There are worse places. 😊



September 2nd

Day 8: Saint Boil: 130 km. Of which 15 because of wrong turnings I took. 😞

Cold night, so got up early and left. Soon the sun was there and stayed all day. Today I crossed the Bourgogne and its famous vineyards: Meursault, Nuits St Georges, Volnay, Pommard, ...

Apparently Beaune is a really beautiful town I should have visited... I know, I know but the urge to move south is strong! 😊

Picture: the vineyards around Meursault. All these nice wines that cost a fortune and that we can't afford. At least I have seen the vineyards. 😊



September 3rd

Day 9: Montmerle-sur-Saone. 90km

From the Bourgogne to the Beaujolais. Everywhere you see wine pickers harvesting the grapes. There are also many of them staying in small tents on my campsite. Mostly Roma.

It was a bit of a difficult day today. Lots of climbing and the pains that are normally coming up after 50-60 km (mainly back and neck and shoulders) were there from km 1. 😞

I guess I overdid it yesterday.

Picture: unpacking on the campsite. In an orderly way of course. 😊



September 4

Day 10: Condrieu. 105 km

I was not looking forward having to cross Lyon by bike but it was easy! First a tunnel of about 2km, for cyclists, pedestrians and trams only, no exhaust fumes!, that took you right into town to the banks of the Rhone, and then following the cycling path, no cars!, along the river. Took me about an hour. After navigating the suburbs I finally ended on the Via Rhona, a cycling path along the Rhone (no cars!). In Vienne I could see the traffic jam on the Route du Soleil on the other side of the river. Suckers! 😊

And I ended up on this nice little campsite, for cyclist, hikers and canoers only. With a nice swimming pool , a bar, good food and breakfast! Ha, holiday!!

Picture: the campsite on the river Rhone



September 5

Day 11: Ales. 190km

60km cycling

130 km train 🚆

Cycled to Tain following the Via Rhona on the border of the Ardeche and the Drome.

And took the train to Ales. For three reasons.

I skip a lot of the climbing. 🤔

Gives me some extra time to visit friends in the Minervois

I don't have to do so many kms per day. Those seem good reasons to me! 😊

Picture: bike on the train



September 6

Day 12: Brissac: 70km

I finally entered the Languedoc, this long stretch in the south of France that goes all the way to the Spanish border. This is now really the south of France. People talk different, the vegetation is different and the woods smell different. Some rosemary, some lavender... I now started the final part of my journey.

Picture: my camping place (yes, hammock included) on this really nice campsite on the banks of the Herault.



September 7

Day 13: Vias: 93 km

I started the day early and crossed some hills to descend in the Gorges de L'Herault. Beautiful. It was also the first really hot day on this trip. I used about the double amount of water as usual. I have been quite lucky with the weather up till now. Almost no rain, not too hot and tailwind most of the time. ☀️ And then finally I reached the Mediterranean today. 🌊☀️🌊
In Vias. I meant to show you a picture of the sea but it was all quite ugly, very touristy and full of people. As bad as the Belgian coast indeed. 😞

So instead I post a picture of a beautiful square full of platanes as they only have here. This square in Hippolyte du Fort, is where I had lunch yesterday.



September 8 2018

Day 14: Peyriac Minervois

First a 50 km trip to Capestang where my sister Nele Vandermeulen and daughter Myrah Vandermeulen were waiting for me for the aperitif! 😊 End of this trip. Hurray! I made it. And then we continued to our good friend Chantal Van Den Putte where we will spend the night. Two great weeks of cycling!

