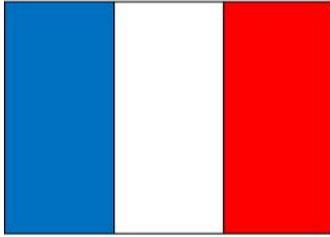


Parijs (F)



Eindhoven (NL)



AtosTour 2018

At the 15th AtosTour started participants from the following countries

- **16 from The Netherlands**
- **16 from Germany**
- **13 from France**
- **9 from UK**
- **3 from Belgium and**
- **One from Ireland, USA, Poland, Finland, Denmark and Romania.**

A mixed international group supported by 14 Crew members

The Crew

The secret of the AtosTour is the absolutely perfect organization and the total commitment of all crew members. For me the AtosTour is the „Tour de France for small cyclists“. It's not a race and it's not about times or who is the first to finish. The length of 475 km and thus the time spent in the saddle is the big challenge which is the same for all participants.

Outstanding is the commitment of the Tour director Gerrit. Three weeks before the start, he drove the whole distance still once again with his car to check the roads in detail and to make the last arrangements for the planned rest stations. He downplays his total commitment to make the Tour a success that is „Only“ his hobby. He is shooting for the perfect organization with maximum security for all participants. All is detailed planned and has to be strictly obeyed. If we come to a rest station, then the baguettes or the cakes are ready and the coffee is smelling. 20 minutes after the arrival the whistle of Gerrit collects all with the command „Ten minutes“ and at the command „Five minutes“ we are on our way back to our bikes to be ready to start. Those after arrival who do not care instantly for baguette and coffee, and plan the body break simultaneously, will face a problem. There is no additional time at all.

He is not the only one being enthusiastic with the Tour. The mechanic Geert, surprised me four years ago. His wheel change takes only 30-40 seconds and he repairs the broken bikes while on tour. There are times during the tour when the lateral sliding door of the car is opened to turn the bike around for further repair. Or our provider Hendrik who runs along the biker queue to distribute water or bananas at even small stops. Very impressive are the 6 motorcyclists who clean us road and push annoying traffic onto the left parking lane. The Harley-Davidson passed us on our left with high speed and the appropriate loudness. Everything was done for our safety and that we cyclists could make good headway.

For years, other companies such as Colt Telecom and the KPMG are trying to put similar tour in action. They have realized the marketing effect, but they do not get the organization done. Either they failed and have given up or have by far not the quality of the AtosTour.

The cyclists-Exotic

The Finnish colleague Jouni was highly motivated. He was destined as a backrider and had even brought his own road bike, half dismantled in a carton, from Helsinki. He would have started already on Thursday afternoon after arriving in Paris. But he had to wait another night. He had trained during the winter time on his touring bike with spikes. Beginning end of April he had snow and ice-free streets. In Finland too, this summer was exceptional nice so that he could train well and was looking forward to the 475 km tour. He has never been cycled that long. But he was certainly not the only participant with this „Handicap“.

My bed neighbor on the first night was the colleague Serban from Romania a bicycle nerd, as he called himself. He gave me a long lecture about the optimum tire width and the appropriate tire pressure. His bicycle for the Tour was borrowed and had only narrow tires. For him this was no longer on the cutting edge of research or knowledge, he said. He wants to bring along his own bike to the Tour next year. I was pretty puzzled, because I drive with narrow tires and at least 8 bar pressure. I understood I was absolutely out of date with my bike. No wonder that I am always have a hard time with the mountains and at the Hamburg Cycclassics race I only ride at the end and never stand on the podium. The Romania knowledge I'm going to verify in depth in the near future. Hey, maybe it's going to work and next year with the podium position as well.

My colleague Christian from the USA lives in Florida now and has made his training rounds there. Since the terrain is mainly flat, he was missing the mountain ranges to get the right fitness. This was the reason why this year he was not in good shape. But I sidetracked him with some stories about my worldwide wine hiking tours, so he resolved his mental and physical weakness.

At the finish, he thanked me for giving him assistance to help out about these difficult mental hours. Two years ago, he had trained in the Rocky Mountains and was in much better fitness.

My Preparation

With my 3,000 training kilometers I felt very well prepared. But during the trip I had to realize that my training was not really a big point at all. On average at least 5,000 kilometers were driven as preparation by the participants. Well, I didn't say it loud but in my thoughts, quality is better as quantity. I was pretty sure. And my feeling was ok which was confirmed in the mountains, where I had enough power to help our Dutch colleague forgetting up a long hill slope. Nevertheless, the Tour is a challenge. Just imagine, sometimes the hills were steep enough that the first gear was necessary with the racing bike, which is pretty rare as snow in summer is. Then a short time later again we drove with more the 50 km/h downhill and then again, a full brake was necessary before the next curve. Some climbs in the Ardennes are pretty cruel to drive and you ask yourself: „Why am I doing this?“ But at the finish, almost everything was forgotten and furthermore we have pedaled 'for charity'.

Even the average speed was just like every year at about 25 km/h, I and many participants too had the feeling that we drove faster than the last years. Looking back the reason was that in the back third of the field we did not reach the necessary speed immediately after curves or ascending slopes. It was the known accordion effect, so fast catch-up were necessary. „Close the gap “, this command we heard always then, because only as a group together we had right of way.

My dear colleague and sports friend Thomas have undershot his bike preparation this year. This year his slogan was a jest: "I am young, I am a dynamic guy and I can deal with this. The AtosTour I want to manage with minimal preparation this year and if it's going bad, then I will sit in the bus.“ He had trained only 400 km. Yes, he is young and dynamic, but this time he failed. Several of the stages he was sitting at the „Poor devil-Flatfoot-or-Bum-and-Calves-preserve bench“ in the rear Tour vehicle. And he was never alone. Six seats were available for casualties and groggy drivers. Thomas still said, that this year the demand was higher as the available places. And one of the bikers couldn't get on board because he was unable to get his legs up. He was just pulled in then from the others.

In the following he wrote to me: „NEE, I was so untrained! The track has never been so hilly;-) “, however with 99% we always drive the same route. In two years, he wants to participate with me again, but then with much more training. He has promised this to me „High and Holy“ .

The Streets

In the recent years the quality of the roads in Belgium has increased pretty good. The concrete slabs with the longitudinal and transverse grooves in the villages have almost disappeared. Finest smooth asphalt indulged our buttocks and wrists. Even the infamous cobbled track had a smooth narrow tar strip on the side after

the half of the track. That was at least a positive conclusion of this track. The first kilometer was again perfect for all masochists. The head stones were camber in the middle of the way by the pressure of the lanes upwards and were therefore even further apart. Only with full physical pressure to the paddles together with an extreme vibration position (Buttocks high from the saddle and handlebars only slightly for the gentleness of the wrists), this section was to be handled for the benefit of bike and biker. To walk this distance, to go easy on buttocks and bike, which had actually been very reasonable, no one dared.

My travel and dining plan

- Wednesday 5.9. Drive to Velbert (near Eindhoven) for accommodation**
- Dinner with appetizer and then plenty of noodles in parmesan, cream sauce and black truffle**
- Thursday 6.9. 06:00 am Drive to Eindhoven; 09:00 am departure by bus to Paris**
- Three thick breads provisions, thanks to Diana, and a baguette at the motorway restaurant in France**
- Dinner in Meaux a town north east to Paris with “Cuisse de Pintade” and delicious pepper sauce and pasta twice**
- Friday 7.9. 05:15 am French breakfast with 2 croissants and baguette; 06:30 am start with the bike; every 2-3 hours a sandwich and during travelling 8 bananas for the 4 stages together**
- Dinner in Mons with turkey schnitzel and abundant pasta**
- Saturday 8.9. 05:45 am Belgian breakfast with 3 rolls; 07:00 am start with the bike; every 2-3 hours a sandwich or “Pain au Chocolat” or 2 big pieces of cheese cake and during travelling 8 bananas for the 4 stages together**
- Dinner in Eindhoven with three different pasta, so twice neat refill**
- Sunday 9.9. 08:00 am The bathroom scale shows a decrease of 4 kg. My Noodles-Cyclist-diet worked perfect and can be recommended unrestricted!**

Conclusion

The pure facts according to my Bicycle App at September 8th at 05:10 pm after arrival in Eindhoven as a sum of the two days:

- **Total distance:** 252.4 km plus 222.6 km = 475.0 km
- **Time "Buttocks on Saddle “:** 18:08 hours
- **Average speed:** 25.45 km/h
- **Max speed:** 53.13 km/h
- **Altitude:** 3,364 m
- **Calories** 19,423 kcal

Despite this performance of 19,423 kcal my sports watch has grumbled with me. On these two days I haven't reached my step target value 😞. Strange but the watch was okay. Typical software problem I have had to realize. The program can't look over the edge of a plate or built a context.

But what my bike computer really could not record:

- **No accident**
- **No flatfoot**
- **Highly sensitive buttocks, despite regular care. But no scouring point**
- **And me: Cheerful whistling at the finish!**

Donation to the German Children's Cancer Foundation



Although I have started my fundraising campaign at the end of June the donation for my commitment was almost 1,500 €. Substitutional for all involved relief organizations the lady of the Dutch organization Kika received a cheque with a total sum about 33,000 €. This was the sum which we cyclists have “retracted” through our commitment. It also includes the part for

the German Children's Cancer Foundation of around 5,350 €

We all can be very proud about that amount. Those who have seen children with cancer very close, they know how well this donation is invested and what amount of help can be done with it. **Thanks to all the donors!**



Heinz