

Guided JURA ROUTE	Riding Day 2
Lac de Joux	Kilometers: 75
to Couvet	Meters of climbing: 850
DAY 02	

When you leave Lac de Joux this morning, you'll hit another very small lake called "Brenet" before reaching the town of Vallorbe.

This is an old steel town and they've got all the ingredients: trees to burn, minerals to mine and a river to harness. Folks here also have strong backs. After all, not everyone can be a watchmaker.

Since we pass through so few towns on this trip, let's take a moment to ponder Vallorbe and its demographics. Indeed, Switzerland is a small country with a reputation for organization and so they're excellent statisticians. In fact, they have a whole government office that does a wonderful job of counting the hairs on people's heads.

Thanks to the Swiss Office of Statistics and a few wikipedians, we know that the population of Vallorbe in 1550 was "22 hearths". But Vallorbe's heyday was in the 1920s when the census determined there were 4,600 inhabitants. Now there are only around 3,000.

Lots of interesting facts indeed:

- 37% of the workers in Vallorbe come in from France.
- The language most spoken after French is Italian (35 speakers)
- The unemployment rate was at 7.7% back in 2010, (the highest unemployment rate that I've ever heard cited for a Swiss town.

OK, off you go. After Vallorbe, it's all down hill...for 5 km and then a hard 10%+ climb that goes on for 7 kilometers. Did you remember to take a cereal bar or two at breakfast? Well, it really is all downhill after that.

If we are making good time, there is a “music box museum” (Musée Baud) in the town of Auberson at the bottom of the hill. Music box museum ? Why would you not simply coast on through town, right ? Well, St. Croix (right next to Auberson) is the music box capital of the WORLD. They’ve got a sign right out front which says so. Remember, you’re still in the region of watchmakers. This area really was the Silicon Valley of wind-up technology in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The final valley that you’ll enter today is “Val-de Travers” and you’ll soon see the Areuseriver on your right.

In the past, after a hard day of fiddling with tweezers and small springs, workers here were sipping absinth. In fact, they invented the stuff.

They had to outlaw it in 1908. The authorities decided that the liquor was making people crazy. In any case, Absinthe is a kind of anise-tasting liquor made from local plants and one of the best distilleries in the world is in the town of Couvet, (our overnight spot).

As you’ll soon see, there is not much to do in Couvet, so the absinthe sipping is an understandable pastime.

Your hotel is a big 18th century inn. They have been hosting weary travellers and their horses for a very long time.

This evening we’ll be eating at the hotel.

Easy on the absinthe or you might see a few ghosts.