



📍 Stop in St. Ursanne and stretch your legs walking through the medieval streets.



Day 5:

Saignlegier → Basel



Distance:

93 Kilometers



Climbing:

1331 Meters

Make sure you pack a jacket this morning. You've got 15km and then a long, long descent into the little medieval village of St. Ursanne.


I love St. Ursanne. Park your bikes and have a walk-about. This little town from the middle-ages is perfectly preserved: you'll find churches, a cloister, a castle and a hermitage. If you come in July, you'll even find knights and long-haired princesses, (they've got a medieval carnival going on).

This is also your first look at Le Doubs river, (pronounced "le-do"). This is a famous river (for tourism) and creates the border between France and Switzerland for perhaps 100km. It's slow moving, very shallow in places and a nice bit of water to have by your side as you coast along on your bike. It's also a source for much of the local cuisine: frog legs, snails and *petite friture*, (small fried fish).

Best to save the fried fish platter for another moment. Remember that descent into St. Ursanne? I'm sure you were thinking, "This is fun, but I know I'm going to pay for it". Indeed...not quite as steep as the descent, but you've got to get out of this hole and that means 400 meters to climb over 8 km. So, get that piece of pie before leaving town.


Once up that hill, things stay relatively flat for awhile. You'll be following a route that takes you right up against the French border. You will notice a change in scenery: more agriculture, more fruit trees and houses that look more like Alsatian homes than Swiss Chalets. The linguistic border is rather fluid, but at some point after Lucelle, you can expect to see less *tarte aux pommes* and more *apfel strudel*. You've got one more hard climb beginning at Kleinlützel, (a bit less challenging than the last, but with your tired legs, you probably won't notice).



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Now it's all downhill to Basel/Bale. Enjoy it. I love this part of the ride: you're in the woods, then pasture, then fields, then villages and they turn into suburbs which lead to the wide tree-lined streets of Basel. If you simply arrived at the Basel train station, you might be a bit intimidated by Basel's bulky architecture, but the ride into town introduces you to the neighborhoods: people, children, pets, butchers, bakers, bars. Basel is beautiful.



 The Doubs river is the perfect place to try frog legs or *petite friture* (fried little fish)

FYI: LSD was invented in Basel. Back in the 1930s. Albert Hoffman inadvertently synthesized the drug at Sandoz laboratory, ingested a small amount and then discovered its powerful effects while riding home on his bicycle. He wrote beautifully about it in his autobiography. May your bicycle trip into Basel be as memorable.