
BIG's News Letter 2008_01 (English Version)

Introduction:

Someone asked me why I am a BIG member. An interesting question that made me think. I became a BIG member when a colleague pointed out that l'Alpe d'Huez was not as tough as I thought it was. He read an article about the BIG challenge in the newspaper. I got interested and eventually got more involved with the challenge itself also. But the main reason to stay a BIG member for me is that the BIG not only takes me to the steepest climbs, steeper than l'Alpe d'Huez. It also takes me to the most beautiful climbs, more beautiful than l'Alpe d'Huez. BIG takes me to places where I otherwise would not have gone. Even to the beautiful Veluwe area in my own country where I had not gone to before. Now I combined the visit with BIG 101 the Posbank. And it has also taken me to mediatic climbs that I see on television in the Giro d'Italia, Tour de France or the Tour of Flanders. It's very special to cycle on the climbs that also my heroes have cycled. Do you want to cycle BIGs from the Tour of Flanders? Or from Ghent-Wevelgem? Well, then join us on this years rendezvous! I'll tell you more about the upcoming rendezvous in the next chapters and even the "About a BIG" is tailored towards the upcoming rendezvous so read on!

Chapters of this newsletter

- 1. TOP5 BIG news.**
- 2. The BIG is online!**
- 3. About a BIG.**
- 4. Conclusion.**

1. TOP5 BIG news.

TOP 1: Rendezvous 2008.

As you may have heard, the BIG organizes a rendezvous for its members in Flanders this year. Now you may think, why should I go there? You may have already cycled these BIGs or perhaps it is even quite a travel for you to get there. The latter was the main hurdle for me when a rendezvous was advertised in Switzerland for instance in 2005. And hence I did not go. But last year I did go to Trento. This was an eye-opener for me. Why? Because I met other friendly and kind BIG members and we all enjoyed the cycling together. During dinner in the evening we talked about cycling, BIGs and about the BIG challenge itself of course. Perhaps this does not convince you. And all I can tell you is that the only way you can be convinced is to join a rendezvous. And why not the next one? I hope I will meet you there!

Read on for the details:

- **26th of April** (Trips planned by Steven FEYS, member 688)
 - **Gather between 08:30-09:00 in Oudenaarde at the Car-park of the Center of the Tour of Flanders: Markt 43 Oudenaarde (Belgium) (near the Market Square and the Saint Walburga Church)**

- Option 1 (6 BIGs):

- Distance: 120 km

- Ascents:

- Edelaere (E3-Price Harelbeke)
- Haaghoek
(Cobbeled part of the Tour of Flanders)
- Leberg (Tour of Flanders)
- Berendries (Tour of Flanders)
- *BIG 117: Muur van Geraadsbergen (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
- *BIG 118: Mont Saint Aubert*
- *BIG 114: Kluisbergen (Tour of Flanders)*
- *BIG 115: Oude Kwaremont (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
- *BIG 116: Paterberg* →
(Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)
- *BIG 113: Koppenberg (Cobbeled climb form previous versions of the Tour of Flanders)*



- Description:

This trip follows the “Tour de Flanders” course but also “Le Pays des Collines” hence you will cycle both in the province of East-Flanders as well as Henegouwen.

- Option 2 (4 BIGs)

- Distance: 72 km

- Ascents:

- *BIG 114: Kluisbergen (Tour of Flanders)*
- Knokteberg
- *BIG 115: Oude Kwaremont (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
- Kruisberg
(Worldchampionships 1963 and 1989)
- *BIG 116: Paterberg (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
- *BIG 113: Koppenberg* →
(Cobbeled climb from previous versions of the Tour of Flanders)
- Steenbeekdries (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)
- Taaienbergh (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)
- Eikenbergh (Tour of Flanders)



- Description:

This trip follows the signs of the Tour of Flanders (Ronde van Vlaanderen).

- Option 3 (3 BIGs):
 - Distance: 72 km
 - Ascents:
 - *BIG 115: Oude Kwaremont (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
 - *BIG 116: Paterberg (Cobbeled climb, Tour of Flanders)*
 - *BIG 114: Kluisbergen (Tour of Flanders)*
 - Description:

This trip follows the signs of the Eddy Merckx trip (46 km + Oudenaarde – Ruien back and forth 26 km).
- After the trip you can visit, optionally, the Centre of the Tour of Flanders www.crvv.org. Here one can also take a shower, costs: 1€40.
- The move from Oudenaarde to Kemmel (75km by car). There we will have dinner around 20:00hrs in “The labyrinth” (<http://www.hetlabyrinth.be/>). And where we sleep at the “De Lork” (<http://www.lork.be/>).
- **26th of April** (Trips planned by Marc DESENDER, member 99)
 - Breakfast.
 - Option 1 (4 BIGs):
 - Distance: 75 km
 - Ascents:
 - *BIG 111: Rodeberg*
 - *BIG 212: Zwarteberg*
 - Boeschepeberg
 - *BIG 211: Mont Cassel* →
 - Mont des Recollets
 - Mont des Cats
 - Mont Kokereel
 - Sulferberg
 - Monteberg
 - *BIG 112: Kemmelberg2*
 - Description:

The last part of this trip follows the new course of Gent-Wevelgem. Due to the accident in 2007, when a lot of cyclists fell, the course was changed and now the ascent of the Kemmelberg is from the village and the descent is via a narrow asphalt road.
 - Option 2 (3 BIGs)
 - Distance: 25 km
 - Ascents:
 - *BIG 111: Rodeberg* →
 - *BIG 212: Zwarteberg*
 - Sulferberg
 - Monteberg
 - *BIG 112: Kemmelberg2*
 - Option 3 (No BIGs)
 - Distance: 46 km
 - Description:

West Flanders hill route
 - After the trip we gather for a farewell drink on the Winery of the Monteberg (www.monteberg.be). A local wine will do us good after the trip.



The tours as described above can also be found at:
<http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/flanders/flanders-pacours.htm>

You can find more details (e.g. a **list of who is joining the rendezvous** and pictures) on:
<http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/flanders/flanders2008.htm>

TOP 2: New Members.

As you may recall from the previous newsletter, we ended 2007 with 635 members? In January 2008 alone we had 197 new members, a record in the challenge's history! And by now we have 911 members so we have grown enormously. It's more like an explosion when one grows 276 members in just 2 months.

So welcome all you new BIG members! We hope that you will enjoy the BIG challenges as much as the rest of us do and that it will bring many good memories to you when you have conquered: a mediatic BIG that you know from the big races like Vuelta, Giro d'Italia or Tour de France or a very beautiful BIG or a very tough BIG. And that is the main attraction that the BIG challenge offers! Our list contains all of these kinds of BIGs.

So go and get them BIGs and enjoy the cyclo climbing experience. If you want to share your experiences then this newsletter offers help. Send your stories and we'll spread them. Look at the "About a BIG" chapter to get an idea.

TOP 3: New Website Features.

Well, here's what has been added to our website:

- The web site is now available in 10 languages as Jerry NILSON was so kind to add the Swedish translation.
- Thanks to Marnix VAN HECKE, also the feet of the BIGs are available on the map so you can easily find where to start the ascent.
- In the menu called "press" you can see an article, thanks to Gabor GYÖRGYI, in an Hungarian official review.
- In the menu called "review", you can see the cover of our next Review that will be sent to the contributing members in March 2008.
- Photos can be now uploaded for the zone 12. These can also be deleted from a wrong BIG and edited to connect them to the right one if the photo was badly located. A description can be added to the photo.

We nowadays make a distinction between visitors, registered and contributing members.

Visitors can become registered members by clicking on the "Subscribe now" link. When one has registered then one has absolutely to activate the account through the website's titles (already member and ...) or by writing a mail to Daniel: daniel@challenge-big.eu.

When you have registered you are able to do the following:

- Register your claims on line.
- Edit your claims, you can add the year you climbed the BIG and the side chosen for the ascent.
- Upload photo's.

So why would you become a contributing member? And what are the costs?

We offer 2 subscriptions: € 10,- contribution for a single member per year or € 15,- contribution for families per year. What is the advantage of being a contributing member? Well, here is the list:

- You will receive at your home on the 1st of March the printed annual review containing narratives by the members, information and the classifications.
- When you reach a new BIG-level or you have a full zone, you will get your diploma.
- Upload photo's.
- See the topographic maps of the BIGs.
- You will be allowed to organize a personal card on the website (planned for the end of March)
- You will be able to calculate your time for a given climb according to your previous times. (planned for end of March)
- You may test out new features on the site.
- You may see some pages hidden for normal members such as the charts/statistics.
- In the member's list, there will be a contribution sign next to your name.

Note: In case of families, only 1 Review will be send to the home address. Diploma's will be available for all family members when a new BIG level is reached as well as that all restricted website features are available for all family members.

We are glad that we have received feedback from members. Very glad with all the positive reactions but also with the improvements, shortcomings and ideas. If you want to provide feedback then mail us: info@challenge-big.eu

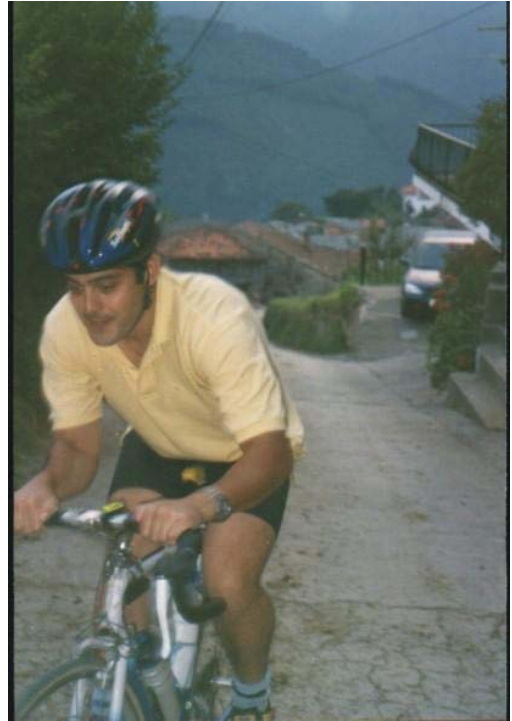
TOP 4: New stock of clothes

Many members may not even know that we sell cycling clothes with a BIG print. This year, a new stock will become available with the same shape than before but with more kinds of clothes (shorts, jerseys, cycling trousers). You can (pre)order through the forum (<http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/big-challenge-f26/jerseys-t69.htm>) Pictures and prices are online: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/jersey.htm>.



TOP 5: Sad News

It's life, but it's always terrible to learn. One of us just died. One of the first Spanish members in our challenge, living in Gijon, and fond of the Asturian mountains, Rafael RIESGO, has left. Rafael (BIG member 143) died at 37 last Saturday after a quick illness. (News from Claudio .MONTEFUSCO). We'll think to him each time that we'll climb his dear asturian climbs.



2. The BIG is online!

This time we highlight the webpages of one of our Hungarian members. Note that on the Forum, Hungary has been the country with most of the postings! So we zoom in on the website of one of the most active Hungarian members: Gabor GYÖRGYI.

The first time I heard from Gabor was in the 2005 Review. He wrote about his tour in the French Alps. An interesting story of a passionate cyclist. And note that he cycled the Alps with his luggage on the bike. As if just the Alps are not enough for him. Very impressive.



Ath the top of the Col de Bonette (fully packed).

So, here is the link where Gabor's adventures start: <http://www.gyorgyigabor.hu/>. Fortunately we can choose between: Italian, English and even German to read his pages. And what will you find there?

- Travelogues of his tours in 13-14 countries of Europe!
- Biketouring tips and suggestions for Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary. (Good start in case you want to claim BIGs in zones 10 and 11).
- His list of cols (74 above 2000 m) that he has cycled in Europe.

This website offers plenty of reading for people like us who enjoy the cyclo climbing experience! But besides of the reading material there are also videos that you can watch (each of them 10 minutes long (because of YouTube):

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RJZodOTzkY>
- http://gyorgyigabor.uw.hu/pireneus_2resz_10perc_v2.wmv
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGWiGu0vzO0>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJk4s96ImUc>

Tip from Gabor: On YouTube at the bottom of the movie-window click the 2nd button from right (it would be sharper and a little bit smaller)

So visit his site and have a nice time!

3. About a BIG.

As stated, this chapter highlights some of the BIGs that one can cycle when one joins the rendezvous. This idea was brought up by the author of this chapter, François CANDAU. I hope it will inspire you to come and join us in Flanders

This time I propose you a trip in Belgium. We, foreigners, have so much heard about these mounts which paved the Flanders or Walloon races that we approach them with a touch of anxiety. Are the paved zones bearable? Are the slopes that stiff? Will the combination of both lead us to failure?

The first BIG which was on my road towards Brussels this day was **Mont Saint-Aubert (BIG 118)**

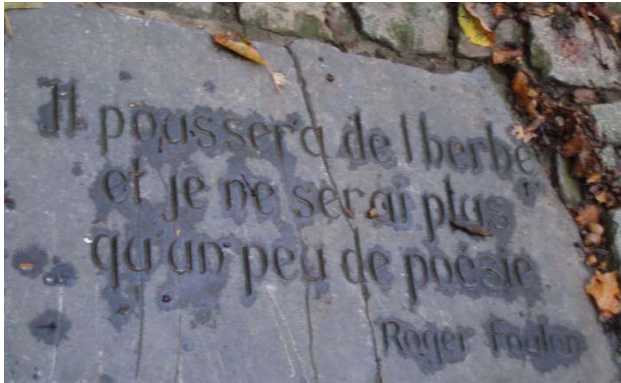


At the northern exit of Tournai, a simple glance makes us understand that it is not a monster.

The rise is quiet, without any paving.

In more it offers a pass (the pass of the Jubaru Cross 99 meters) for the collectors.

Arrived at the top you will find a beautiful panorama occupied by a hotel who asserts himself in the landscape. You will also find there beautiful family walks for Sunday afternoons. My favourite place is this charming way paved with poems which remind us our youth.



Change of environment for the second BIG, the **Wall of Grammont, Muur van Geraardsbergen (BIG 117)**. Here we are in the heart of the legend of the Flanders Ronde. Impossible not to find the climb: when you arrive in Geraardsbergen many road-signs lead you to the Muur.



Here are the stages of the famous climb :

The bridge which spans Dendre



The Town square and this superb town hall



The pink house which seems to hide a terrible threat

The small way under the chestnuts then this passage where the percentage rises up to 20% whereas the slipping paving stones make your back wheel turn in neutral.



Finally the last wall before the chapel



The top before the toboggan of the descent.

It is all in paving stone but bearable, it is short and intense, that breathes the legend and that is worth a second passage just for pleasure!





The last BIG which I carried out on the way back was **Barrage du Ry de Rome (BIG 119)**. It is about a beautiful two kilometers rise with a regular percentage between 7 and 12%.

While coming from Couvin, take N5 towards Rocroi then turn left when reaching this road-sign:



From there do not follow the road-signs which lead you to the barrage through the valley but keep right on N920 which constitutes the road of the BIG. At the top you will have the pleasure to ride down towards the famous stopping and to return to Couvin (of which here is a tourist sight) in the valley.

This BIG is pleasant by its very natural character.

François CANDAU



6. Conclusion:

Well for quite some members this will have been their first newsletter. I hope you have enjoyed it and maybe even have thought about handing in something that you want to share with the other members. Here is a poem for instance that one of our members wanted to share with us:

*Climbing mountains by bike,
viewing the rolling landscape,
while thinking about fascinating matters,
you realize that you don't know why,
but do know how, to get to the top,
where you'll reach a lot of satisfaction*

Erwin DEKKERS (member 765, son of.....)

So don't leave it a thought and send us your input for the newsletter. We are always very happy with your feedback and input. And we hope to meet you at the Rendezvous in Oudenaarde in April. So see you then or until the next newsletter.

Best regards,
The newsletters team

François CANDAU (Present at the rendezvous)
Helmuth DEKKERS (Present at the rendezvous)
Daniel GOBERT (Present at the rendezvous)
José CASAS-ARAGON
Piero ROTA
Nico STAES