

BIG's News Letter – 2010.01

English Version

Edito: Never ask why!

In the previous Edito I started with why and corrected myself by starting with how. And careful readers may have seen this also in the top 1 news item of the 3rd newsletter of 2009. And even at the end of the "About a BIG" chapter of the 3rd newsletter of 2009 you could have read about why and how. Finally I will explain to you the reason why we prefer how over why. If we tell others about our passion of uphill cycling and that we like the steep roads and the toll they take then quite some people will ask: "Why do you do this?" This is in fact a faulty question. They should ask how we do it. Like we should never ask ourselves why we cycle to a summit but we should ask ourselves how we should get to the summit. How do we find the right gear the right starting point. In this way we will succeed and not if we question ourselves by asking why we do this. So go out there and tell people about your passion and how you conquer the mountains on bike!

1. TOP5 BIG news

TOP 1: A fantastic new website 2.0





It's the end of our website as we know it. It's the end of our website as we know it. It's the end of our website as we know it and I feel fine (adapted lyrics from R.E.M.). Or one could also say: The old website is dead, long live the new website! The website we currently have is about to be replaced by a new website! The **birth date** is planned for the **21.06.2010**.

The website will look like the current one, but with a new design and more features. Here in a nutshell the changes and new features:

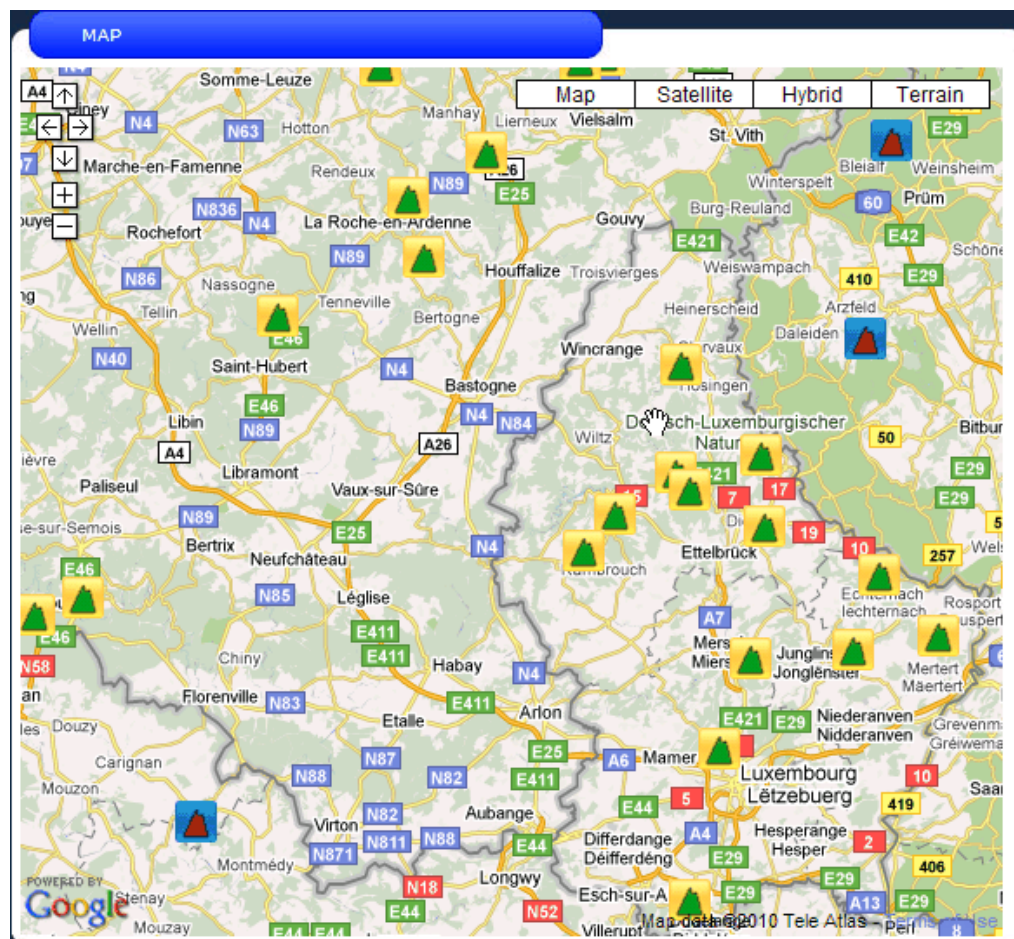
1. Amount of languages : 15 instead of the 11 we currently have.
2. **MORE FOR THE NON-CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS – BLUE COLOUR MENUS**
 - a. Every BIG and every Member will be shown in one view, on one page.
 - b. The maps will show on GoogleMaps and will show all the routes from the feet to the top in a blue colour.
 - c. Your progression will be shown for each zone with a green square designating the part of each zone of what you've climbed and a red square with the part of the zone not climbed.
 - d. The "Old" BIGs (numbers from 1 to 950 having had different names aside before) and the "zone 12" (numbers 951 to 1000) will be managed differently. You'll know exactly who has climbed what. The zone 12 will also be more clear and more precisely described.
 - e. The overview of the members will show precisely your step reached. One half a star gives your level. For example: level BIG2 will give 1 star on the right of your name; level BIG3 will give one star and a half.
 - f. A "help" menu will of course....help you. If you've some problems to understand the website somewhere, this new menu will help you to understand everything and the way to surf inside our new website.
 - g. There will be a "social network", just like Facebook or Twitter, but inside the challenge just for the BIG members. You'll be able to follow chosen friends among the BIG's members. You'll see their last claims, actions about the BIG, you'll be able to communicate with them in some groups,... It will little by little take the place of the forum.
 - h. A better search engine with more possibilities to search.
 - i. Ability to edit a short post about a BIG that we just climbed (menu "notes")
 - j. 100 credits at the start to be able to try the **GREEN COLOUR MENUS** (see just below) and possibility to increase these credits by inviting new contributing members

3) **MORE FOR CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS (Just 5 €/year) - GREEN COLOR MENUS**

- Every BIG will be described by new scores (mediatic, touristic, energetic and bomb points). A general quotation will be given to a BIG. It will help to see its real value.
- All the gradients (percentages) of the profiles will be shown through better profiles than the current ones, still online for the non contributing members. The contributing member will have a more precise vision of the slopes.
- The GPS tracks will be online to be downloaded in your GPS before trying an attempt to cycle a BIG. Also GoogleEarth tracks, will be available only for the contributing members.
- The descriptions' pages will be online giving the names of the streets and of the roads used to reach a top. The precise way to go will be shown for the contributing members. And so with the usual best links of a given BIG
- All the timers are now online and ready for all the sides. With 1 climb, you'll see the class in which you are. With this class, the contributing member will be able to preview the time necessary for him to climb a new BIG.
- A fantastic new feature (original idea of Martin POST member 308): on the general GoogleEarth Map, selecting one zone, the contributing member will be able to see in a green colour his claims and in a red color the BIGs he has still to climb. Besides that also the BIGs inside the zone will be shown in a yellow background outside the zone will be shown in a blue background so you will not miss out on BIGs that are just outside a zone but close to the ones you were intending to cycle. Here the icons

-  Already claimed BIG in the zone you selected
-  Already claimed BIG outside the zone you selected
-  BIG not yet claimed in the zone you selected.
-  BIG not yet claimed outside the zone you selected.

And below an example can be seen where Zone 3 (Benelux) is selected (yellow background) but also Zone 4 (Germany) and Zone 5 (France) can be seen (blue background).



- g. New classifications - possibility to ask some classifications according to some characteristics
 - h. Unlimited credits during one year (i.e. full access) to have the above mentioned features, alarm on the birthday to invite you to contribute once again for the coming year.
4. COMMITTEE'S MEMBERS
- It will no longer be necessary to ask to the President, the Secretary or the Webmaster something necessary with the job of a committee's member. The adminpanel will give the possibility to any manager in the committee to read and use a section of the official database (BIGs and members) according to his precise job and what it requires. You want to have the email addresses of the members with some characteristic (nationality, contribution, claims,...) ? You want to have the details of all the BIGs of a certain region ? You'll be able to do it !"

TOP 2: Summary & feedback BIG-day.

On the 21st of March there was of course the BIG day that was organised to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the BIG challenge. The idea was to gather on 25 places throughout Europe and cycle there 1,000 altimeters and then to make a picture of the different groups at midday (12:00 CET) when all the members raise their bike above their head. These pictures could be sent by email or MMS to a special webpage of our website where they would be visible shortly after the picture was sent.

"The BIG day has been less big than expected first but has been differently an amazing BIG-day. Could we imagine to see 62 Hungarians bringing their bikes up their heads for the challenge BIG ? Could we imagine about 15 Romanian members in Pasul Bran and the same amount of cyclists in Luxemburg? Of course, the "BIG" countries staid where they were: The Netherlands with 55 and Belgium with 35, adding its two places, were at their place and above all gave good occasions to members to know other members and to open their cycloclimbing relationships. Spain had as much members present in the BIG-day as Belgium !! Italy was a victim of the rain but was fit and well on the field with 20 members. Deceptions are coming from France (5 members present for more than 300 subscribed), Switzerland,... But well, let's not forget that some guys went alone to some places like in Mont Cassel, Mont Faron, Dientner Sattel, Stanan de Vale and Mam Tor. Thanks to them like we would like to thank all the managers of this finally big BIG day because they used time and energy to welcome all the coming members in their meeting. Sometimes with a diploma, sometimes with a drink as a present, sometimes with a speech to explain what our challenge is all about.

Here are the final results: 183 members joined the BIG day events throughout Europe:

| Place | Country | Amount of Members |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Mam Tor | England | 1 |
| Posbank | The Netherlands | 55 |
| Mur de Huy | Belgium | 22 |
| Muur van Geraardsbergen | Belgium | 10 |
| Gorges du Loup | Luxembourg | 16 |
| Mont Cassel | France | 1 |
| Col du Granier | France | 2 |
| Mont Faron | France | 1 |
| Montserrat | Spain | 13 |
| Urkiola | Spain | 21 |
| Trifels | Germany | 12 |
| Poggio | Italy | 1 |
| Ghisallo | Italy | 10 |
| Passa della Futa | Italy | 10 |
| Dientner Sattel | Austria | 1 |

| Place | Country | Amount of Members |
|---------------|----------|-------------------|
| Skalka | Slovakia | 5 |
| Dobogo-Kő | Hungary | 62! |
| Stana de Vale | Romania | 1 |
| Pasul Bran | Romania | 1 |

The following links are available :

- Overview:
 - <http://bigday.challengebig.be/>
 - <http://bigascensions.free.fr/leversdevelo/jump.htm>
- BIG-day in Holland (Posbank):
<http://www.mijnalbum.nl/Album=CLAUTEVG>
- BIG-day in Belgium (Mur de Huy) :
 - Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejyG7S3X6Ts>
 - Pictures: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jacquemin-dominique>
- BIG-day in Hungary (Dobogókő):
<http://picasaweb.google.com/gyorgygabor8/20100321BIGDay>
- BIG-day in Germany (Trifels) :
<http://picasaweb.google.de/simonbinner/Trifels?authkey=Gv1sRgCPT8x4GrqlaFPg&feat=directlink>
- BIG-day in Italy (Passo della Futa):
<http://www.myalbum.com/Album=SGUAOTJB>
- BIG-day in Rumania (PasulBran):
<http://picasaweb.google.com/viorelmicu72/20100321Fundata#>
- Forum :
<http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/the-big-day-f32/>

Thanks to all the organisers and members who have made the BIG day come to life. And a special thanks to our webmaster Wouter de Ruyck for fixing the special webpage with a very tight deadline.

TOP 3: BIG's 25th anniversary

A number of events have been organised to celebrate the challenge BIG's 25th anniversary. The following we have already described in the previous newsletter:

- 21.03.2010: B.I.G DAY
- 01-12.07.2010: OPERATION 2525
- 01.01-31.12.2010: IRONBIG25

So I will not go into detail for these events. But we are proud to tell you that the 1st grandparents or Iron BIGgers have been come into appearance. The first Iron BIGgers and grandparents of BIG 131: Col du Rosier (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/131.htm>) are:

Dominique JACQUEMIN
(<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/32.htm>)

and Dominique VANSTIPHOUT
(<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/617.htm>)



Other iron BIGgers and granparents are:

- Rudy Dewez (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/68.htm>):
Muur van Geraardsbergen (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/117.htm>)
- Arnaud Decostre (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/167.htm>):
Mont Saint-Aubert (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/118.htm>)
- Peter de Vreugd (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/1110.htm>):
Italiaanse weg (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/102.htm>)

The following members have started their attempt too:

- Rafael GUIJARRO (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/591.htm>) has started on BIG 425: El Portillon (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/425.htm>)
- Josep COLOMER SALGUEDA (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/2711.htm>) has started on BIG 432 Coll de Bracons (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/432.htm>)
- Nicodin GHEORGHE (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/2484.htm>) has started on BIG 863: Pasul Bran (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/list/863.htm>)

You can find the actual status of the members who are attempting to become an Iron BIGger and grandparent on: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/ironbig25.htm>.



Besides the events we now also offer a backpack with text: "Challenge B.I.G - 25th birthday - 1985-2010" as a collectors item to remember the 25th anniversary of our challenge. You can get them by buying them in one of our meetings of this year. The backpack costs € 9,- year. See pictures and more information on: <http://big-shopping.over-blog.com/>

TOP 4: Zone 12

As we have grown so rapidly it may well be the case that we have quite some members who have not heard of our famous zone 12. This is the outside Europe zone where BIGs 951 up to 1,000 can be found. Not designated by the BIG which ascents are valid. But you can choose, with certain limitations, your own BIGs in that zone. For more details look at point 3.2 of our rules: <http://www.challenge-big.eu/rules.htm>.

We even have a special manager for Zone 12: Etienne MAYEUR and you can mail him on a special Zone 12 email address: zone12@challenge-big.eu. Etienne asks all members who have claims in zone 12 to detail their ascents. He will ask them to add, if the Name of the ascent, the country where the ascent was located in, the date the ascent was cycled and the altitude of the foot and summit.

If you receive a mail from Etienne then please fill the details he asks for so we can keep track of the ascents that have been cycled in Zone 12. Thanks!

TOP 5: Webpages.

Many members have updated their webpages lately so you can read up on their cycling escapades. Here is a short overview:

- Helmuth DEKKERS
<http://members.ziggo.nl/phme.dekkers/>
- György DOMONKOS
<http://bikemag.hu/tura/egynapos-miniturak-hollandia-es-belgium>
- Jerry NILSON
<http://cycloclimbing.com/index.html>
- Gabór GYÖRGYI
http://www.gyorgygabor.hu/2009_Tenerife_LaPalma.html
- Kevin SPEED
<http://www3.snapfish.co.uk/share/p=812101263151824306/l=2502049006/g=120416276/cobrandOid=1007/otsc=SYE/otsi=SALB>

The BIG is online.

This time, BIG Challenge decides to look definitely in the East direction. The site that we have chosen is Csaba Holló-Vaskó's one: www.hvcsbike.mlap.hu. Since this site is in Hungarian language, I have asked my friend Csaba to introduce himself, and he did it in French (and in English, and in Polish)!

It's your go, Csaba: "Hello, my name is Csaba Holló-Vaskó, I am Hungarian and 36 years old. I am married to Bernadett and we have two daughters, Flóra (4 years old) and Sára (2 years old). I am a teacher of Living Foreign Languages: English and French. Besides, I speak Polish and Italian. I have equally got a degree, I am a Teacher of Music and I play the bassoon.



I have ridden a road bike since I bought a Trek 1400 in 2006. Since then, it has been my true companion on my trips. As the slogan of Trek says: your Trek will take you anywhere. I have participated in several bike races, like the Marathon of the Dolomites. However, I am getting old, therefore, going on trips has taken the place of racing in my life.

Being a man who believes in God, I find it really important to admire God's work of art, namely, the beauty of the landscape. On my trips, I can find man made churches as well as God made cathedrals: that is the mountains. I love them, the mountains. The town where I am from, that is Miskolc, is situated in the North-East of Hungary, and is surrounded by mountains (the Bükk Mountains, and a bit farther, the Matras).

Climbing, making efforts, admiring the blue of the sky, feeling the scent of plants, listening to symphonies performed by birds, watching colours of nature that no painters have ever painted give me pleasure. Riding for several hours is the best of any meditations. The best thoughts come to my mind when I ride, like what I am going to play with my daughters, and what I am going to teach my pupils, etc.



When I train, I am often alone. However, since I started to organize pilgrimages for my pupils (see www.fraterzarandoklat.mlap.hu) I have made friends on the roads. And when I climb BIGs with the Hungarian or the international members, again I am with friends. This way, I have met new friends, and at this point, I must admit I owe a great deal to BIG Challenge. Finding friends in France, in Italy or anywhere is a pleasure. We are members of the same family, that is we are riders. The rest, nationality, political point of view, religion, race, age or sex is not important. We are friends united by the bike."

P.S.: Our next pilgrimage will take place in July 2010, we are going to Madonna del Ghisallo. You can find our program at the following link: <http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/italiano-f6/pellegrinaggio-a-madonna-del-ghisallo-t323.htm> and of course you can join us.

Csaba HOLLÓ-VASKÓ (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/648.htm>)

About a BIG (La Palma) :

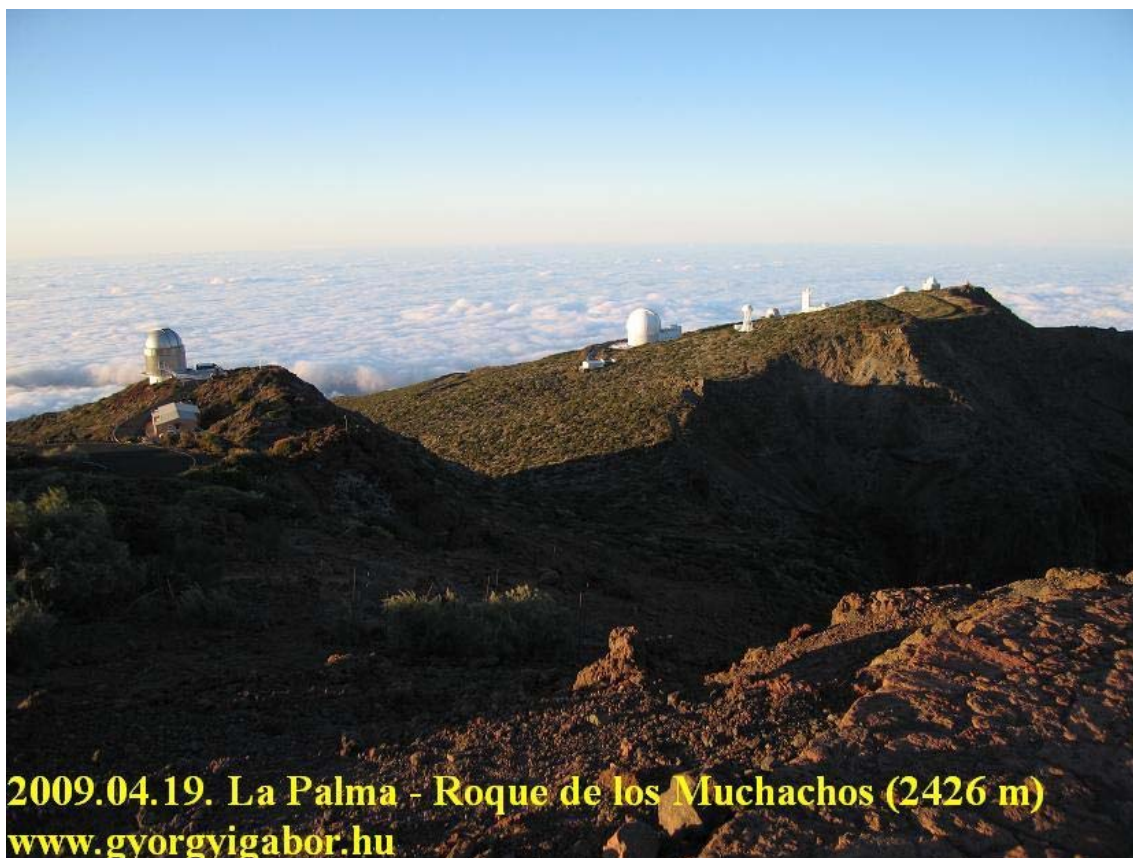
Until now I cycled more than 120 different ascents going above 2000m, but I can say, **Roque de los Muchachos (2426 m)** is in the top 3. If I count only the scenery and natural beauty and I don't take into account the cycling history of a climb, for me Roque is the most beautiful in my 16 years of cycling.



2009.04.19. La Palma - Roque de los Muchachos & Gábor

The island of La Palma is one of the seven islands of the Canary islands in the Atlantic ocean a few hundred kms next to Africa. The islands can be found 3600kms from Vienna from where I flew there in the spring of 2009.

The terrain of La Palma is 706 m², so it's the 5th big islands of the Canary islands. It's highest point is the **Roque de los Muchachos (2426 m) – BIG no. 498**, on which can be found the „3rd most serious” observatory complex of the World with minimum 12 observatory.



2009.04.19. La Palma - Roque de los Muchachos (2426 m)
www.gyorgyigabor.hu

This height difference is the most in the world for such a small island, that's why the island is called the most steepest island of the world. There are few webcams there, I suggest this:

<http://www.not.iac.es/weather/index.php?v=webcam1>

By the date 15th April, 2009 at 8:30pm and 19th April 2009 at 8 pm. You can find me on the pics ☺ On the website of the NOT observatory you can find weather data too, but you have to know that because of the serious sunshine you feel warmer than the actual temperature is.

The island has 85,000 inhabitants, and 18,000 people live in the capital of the island, Santa Cruz de la Palma. The island is not visited by masses, as Tenerife or Gran Canaria. I read a very good sentence about it: „If you are a respecter of the wild nature and admirer of the wonderful nature pictures, then La Palma is sure to spellbind You.” It happened!

The Roque de los Muchachos (it's name means: rock of the boys) can be climbed from two sides; both are paved roads. The eastern road starts just next to Santa Cruz de la Palma by sea level, so You has to ascend more than 2,400m height difference. The other ascent starts at the level of ca. 1,000m, but if you don't use a car to reach that point, then you have to cycle there on hilly and panoramic terrain from Santa Cruz with climbing ca. 1,500 m height difference.

The eastern ascent goes first to the 2,300m high ridge of the Caldera Taburiente which is the main crater of the island. After 1 km flat section it goes down for 2km long then after turning left you have to ascend 2.5 kms yet to the summit.

The steepness-diagram of the eastern side can be found here:

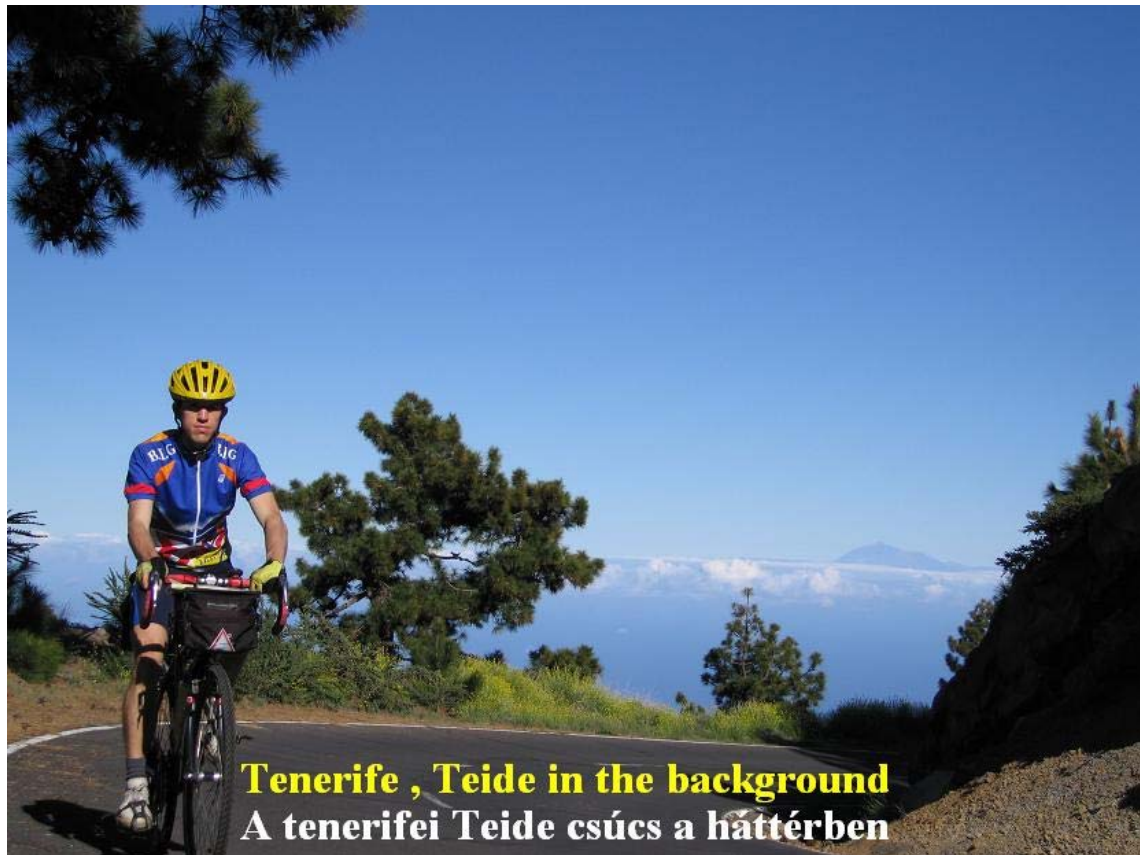
<http://www.climbbybike.com/climb.asp?Col=Roque-de-los-Muchachos&gryMountainID=5037>

The 30km long first part has 2,260 m height difference, so the average steepness is 7.5%. After the 1km long section along the beach it started to ascend. First it goes between a few houses, **along with palm trees, cactuses, lemon trees, orange trees and I also saw papaya. This panoramic mediterranean vegetation changed for tropical vegetation with its fir trees, mosses, bracken and lichens at about 600m height, and uppermost, above ca. 1,700m the vegetation and surrounding is typical at / by mountains.** The road often offers wonderful views downwards: first - to the level of 500m, when the road goes into the forest - to Santa Cruz and the surrounding ocean area. Next time above 1,200m the forest sometimes let some views down to the ocean and up to the mountains and forest. This level the ascent goes through the clouds: when I cycled there I had not too much, but at other times the weather could be cold inside the clouds. Have enough clothes with you!



The ascent leaves the forest and you have endless panorama to North (ocean and the rocky beach and mountainside) above ca. 1,800m. You will see the highest peak of Tenerife, the 3718m high Teide, maybe above the clouds. By the ridge of the Caldera I suggest to walk up to the ridge to look inside the crater. From the short descent you will see a lot of observatories.

The panorama from the top is amazing. You can see the whole island: just under and next to your feet the Caldera Taburiente crater, then the 1,500-1,800m high mountains in middle and South-La Palma. When I was there I could see as clouds couldn't go above the mountains. To North you can see Barlovento (down from the edge of the village I could see the peak), and sometimes the road which goes on the mountainside and on which maybe you arrived to the NW junction to turn upwards.



The NW ascent (from the junction by the main road) starts at ca. 1,130m. From Santa Cruz you have to cycle on hilly terrain: climbing ca. 1,800m height difference on wonderful panoramic road. If you arrive from Los Llanos del Adriane then first you met with a continuous climb to El Time viewpoint, then long, almost flat 30kms and at last there will be ca. 10km hilly section to the junction.

2-2kms on both sides of the junction you can find bar or restaurant or shop to buy some chocolate or food for the climb, but that's the last occasion. The ascent is 16 km long from here to the top, so it's average steepness is 7.8%, the maximum is 15% based on a sign next to the road. The steepness is almost continuous, so it won't be under 6%. Opposite of the other side, this climb gives views during the section in the forest, you can see to North and West and above ca. 100-1,500 m : above clouds! I thought there: I look that direction where America can be found far away. On this climb I had fortune with the wind, as I was just sheltered by the mountainside against the strong wind. The road comes out from the forest at ca. 1,900m, from there: wonderful panorama down to the ocean and up to the mass of observatories.

Suggestions:

Travel to La Palma: As I know you can reach La Palma by airplane from Tenerife (or another canarian island) or by ferry (3 ferrylines) from Tenerife or other island. To Tenerife you can choose between a lot of airplanes, normal or low cost airlines.

Refreshment: Because there after leaving Santa Cruz or the bar / restaurant next to the junction on the NW side you have no opportunity to buy some food or get some water so have enough water and food with you!

Weather: Although the temperature for example in April was only between 5-10 degrees celsius during the day, because of the sunshine it is OK, but after sunset (I had this by 2300m) the temperature sink very fast. I measured 3 degrees Celsius on the descent I had to put on warm raintrousers, polar jersey and windstopper and jacket on me. Sometimes the bare part of the climb can be windy, so have warm clothes with you (UV index can be 9-10 degrees!). Because of the sunshine you should use suncream: the UV index can be extreme: 9-10 degrees!

Traffic: As La Palma is not disturbed by the mass of tourists (I hope it will remain) in April on the climb I met with ca. 10 men or women till I reached the summit. You can enjoy for more hour long the calmness, the nature: **You will be and the breathing nature, nothing else!**

PS: Cycling the Teide plateau in Tenerife is also nice, but the forest the flora and calmness impressed me more in La Palma.

Have a nice trip and enjoy it very much! You won't forget this!

Travelogue: http://www.gyorgyigabor.hu/2009_Tenerife_LaPalma_eng.html

Photoalbum (about the whole 2 week long tour):

<http://picasaweb.google.com/gyorgyigabor8/2009AprilTenerifeLaPalmaByBicycle>

I don't know if it is interested by someone, but there are GPSies tracks of my ascents:

<http://www.gpsies.com/map.do?fileId=yumbrfcqjghzkzI>

<http://www.gpsies.com/map.do?fileId=ijxvlghavbtaolwc>



By Gábor GYÖRGYI (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/314.htm>)

Conclusion:

That's it for now. Time to stop reading and to start rolling again now the snow has finally vanished, temperatures have gone way above zero again and the daylight lasts longer. Until the next newsletter.

Regards, the newsletters team:

Enrico ALBERINI

François CANDAU

Helmuth DEKKERS

Jean GANGOLF

Joël GANGOLF

Daniel GOBERT

Claudio MONTEFUSCO

Nico STAES