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**BIG's News Letter 2008\_03 (English Version)**  
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**Introduction:**

Summer holiday has come and gone. And, did you respond to the call of the mountains? No BIG member can resist this call I would think. You can see it in the claims for 2008 that have already been registered. These are impressive figures and the year is not over by far. And not only the amount of claims for 2008 is impressive but also our increase in the amount of members. It keeps astounding me how fast we grow since we have the new website. Well, enough about impressive numbers, let's get to the business.

**Chapters of this newsletter**

1. **TOP 5 BIG news.**
2. **The BIG is online!**
3. **About a BIG.**
4. **Conclusion.**

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## **1. TOP5 BIG news.**

### **TOP 1: Crossroads & Meetings**

- Crossroads:

After the successful BIG meeting in Flanders earlier this year, there was also a non official BIG meeting where the roads of BIG members crossed with one another. We had 2 of these Crossroads in August:

- 1) Sion/Switzerland (11-17.08.2008 ) initiated by Etienne MAYEUR.
- 2) Matras/Hungary (18-20.08.2008) initiated by Gabór Kreicsi .

So what is exactly the difference between an official BIG meeting and a non official BIG crossroad? Let me explain:

- The official meeting will be annual and the place where it is held will be decided by the committee (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/comity.htm> ). This committee will manage the accomodations and the general programma with specific tours and dates and the possibilities for free attempts for other regional BIGs.
- The crossroads can be asked for by any BIG member and will be promoted on the BIG's website in case: The committee and the hosts will not have to manage the accomodations and the tours. But the hosts do have to give a precise rendezvous in the morning for the daily decisions and in the evening for the common lunches. Last but not least, there should be at least three different members from three different families at the same place at these dates, to give a good company to the eventual other members.

In case you want to ask for a crossroad to be promoted you can send a mail to In case you [daniel@challenge-big.eu](mailto:daniel@challenge-big.eu) or ([helmuth@challenge-big.eu](mailto:helmuth@challenge-big.eu) or).

The text and the pictures from the Siongrie 2008 crossroads (Siongrie is a portmanteau of the two words Sion and Hungary ) are now available in French at <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/sion/siongrie-texte.htm> and in English at <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/sion/siungary-text.htm>

And more pictures of both Crossroads and who joined for one or more days can be found at: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/sion/sion.htm>

- Meetings

Well in advance we inform you on the BIG meeting of 2009. It's take place from the 2<sup>nd</sup> until the 6<sup>th</sup> of July in the Bayern region of Germany. In Sonthofen to be precise.

We hope that as we announce this 2009 meeting in time that you can plan this in your calendar and hence are able to join us this time.

If you are interested or want to know more about the program of the 2009 meeting then you can link to: <http://bigascensions.free.fr/rendezvous/bayern.htm>.

Finally we kindly ask you to pre-register for this meeting in case you have firm plans to come to Sonthofen in 2009. This so we can try to accommodate all members who want to join in one hotel/hostal. The accommodation will of course impose a limit on the amount of members who can stay there from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July to the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2009. So please pre-register via our forum: <http://big-forum.forumsmotion.com/meeting-2009-sonthofen-f39/subscriptions-allgau-2009-t172.htm>

Thanks for your understanding!

### **TOP 2 Check-up**

Yes, the challenge-BIG needs to see the doctor too to see if it is still fit. So in October all committee members will be invited to answer a great questionnaire to check up the challenge E.g. on rules, website, jerseys, reviews, meetings, communications, etc.

But we are after your input too. Please let us know what you feel should be addressed in this questionnaire so we are able to take this along in the checkup

You can send your suggestions to: Daniel GOBERT ([daniel@challenge-big.eu](mailto:daniel@challenge-big.eu)) or Helmuth DEKKERS ([helmuth@challenge-big.eu](mailto:helmuth@challenge-big.eu))

Thanks for your help!

### **TOP 3: Change in Georgia**

We have a couple of changes in our Superlist of BIGs located in Georgia:

- BIG 874  
For this BIG it's only the name that changes. Khrestovy Pereval is a Russian expression. The correct Georgian name is Djvaris Ughelt (Djvaris = Khrestovy = Cross), (Ughelt = pereval = pass).
- BIG 875  
Here we have a real change as Gudaury is just a winter resort inside the ascent of BIG 874 (Djvaris Ughelt ). Hence the Judges of the Superlist have selected Zkhrats Karo. This pass was suggested by our member Eibert VAN 'T HOF, just back from a travel there and by the well known pages of Fred Ferchaux, the French world cyclist (<http://fred.ferchaux.free.fr/georgie/itigeo08.htm>)

Unfortunately the situation in Georgia is a bit tensed at the moment but we all hope that this situation will change for the better soon.

#### **TOP 4: Press and books**

Richard VAN AMEIJDEN (<http://www.challenge-big.eu/member/144.htm>), the highest ranking Dutchman in the general classification) has written a new book called: "De 25 Mooiste Fietsgebieden van Europa".

The book (ISBN 978-90-4391-194-8) is published by Tirion Sport Editions ([www.tirion.nl](http://www.tirion.nl)). And includes explanations on more than 150 BIGs !

**There is only one drawback for some of our members, the book is written in Dutch!**



#### **TOP 5: Battles at the top**

Have you been keeping an eye on the number one in our general classification? Well, perhaps you should do this as the runner up (Eric LUCAS) was number 1 for some time with 743 BIGs against 742 BIGs for Etienne MAYEUR. But now Etienne is back on the top with 750 BIGs. How long will he be able to keep this position? We wish both Eric and Etienne good luck with this battle.

For the classification for 2008 there is not really a battle. We have a very familiar name there on number 1: François CANDAU. It seems that besides writing the "About a BIG stories" that he also finds the time to cycle this incredible amount of BIGs: more than 100! The runner up is Gilles JACQUEMIN but he's trailing on a respectable distance with 69 BIGs. But who knows who will be the number 1 at the end of 2008?

And then the countries seem to battle too. The Netherlands was the first to exceed 300 BIG members. But now Belgium has more than 300 BIG members too. Spain is not that far yet but also has grown a lot and now has more than 100 Members.

We now also have a 4<sup>th</sup> member who cycled more than 500 BIGs! An impressive number and hence we congratulate Dominique JACQUEMIN with this fantastic achievement.

## 2. The BIG is online.

Or perhaps the title of this chapter should say "Svenska är online" this time as we present the webpage of one of our Swedish members: Jerry NILSON. You may have seen his name also in the news section of the BIG's webpages as Jerry has just put the first 3 pages online out of the 29 that will describe his Tour of the Alps that he cycled this year in word and pictures. You can find this Tour of the Alps 2008 at: <http://cycloclimbing.com/tour2008/>.



Jerry NILSON at the Viderjoch

There are plenty of other tours available via the main page (<http://www.cycloclimbing.com/>). Are you interested in the Dolomites, Pyrenees, Cantabria & Asturias or even Mallorca or Colorado? Then you will find the stories and pictures on Jerry's pages.

And then there are the pages that I find especially interesting. These are pages on the Alps and Pyrenees but then with a focus on: the highest paved passroads, cyclable gravel passroads and mountain peak roads or cul-de-sac roads. I guess that these kind of pages are appeal to most of the BIG members. Where do I need to go to cycle the highest passroad of the Alps? Do you know which one that is? Well, I know it now for both Alps and Pyrenees. And it's an impressive list of ascents that Jerry has mastered over the years I can tell you. You will not be disappointed with the ascents that are listed.

And while browsing through his pages I found another useful item. A package list that one can print to prepare for a cycling trip. A neat feature I think that I have not seen on any other cyclist's website. Print it and you can check and mark the list to see if you are fit to go

And finally, for those who are more interested in Jerry himself then you can link to his more personal pages at: <http://www.eyeless.org/>.

### 3. About a BIG.

This time we leave Europe since we land after one flying night on Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. On tourist folders, Reunion is named “the intense island” or “the large spectacle island”.

Indeed you must remember that this island offers on a small surface a multitude of landscapes as spectacular as different: a vegetable world provided with 3 majestic mountainous circuses (the climax of the island is 3066 meters), a mineral world with the Piton de la Fournaise one of the most active volcanoes in the world (1 even 2 eruptions per annum), a watery world with Saint-Gilles lagoon: twenty kilometers of populated translucent multicoloured fish water. You must add an astonishing melting pot of cultures resulting from the successive settlements: white, black, Chinese, Indian.

In any case, don't fly to Reunion in order to stay on the beach (in this case, prefer the sister island: Mauritius). On the other hand, for BIG members and pass hunters, it is a paradisiacal place: ten referred passes and several tops over 2000 meters.



I propose you to follow me towards these passes over 2000 meters. Our final goal is the Pas de Bellecombe (2311 meters), foot of Piton de la Fournaise, the volcano of Reunion. My starting point is the city of Saint-Benoît (at sea level) from where starts the only road that crosses the island. It is named plains road (for the villages called Plaine des Palmistes and Plaine des Caffres). Obviously everything is relative! It needs a rise of almost 1000 meters in full heat to reach the village of Plaine des Palmistes. Les “palmists” are the palm trees, which one feasts on final bud (heart of palm named here “chou palmiste”).

At this altitude, the temperature is pleasant. At the exit of Plaine des Palmistes, we attack the sharp bends that constitute "the great rise" and give access to Bellevue pass (1606 meters). About beautiful sight (Bellevue in French), you are likely to be frustrated: the weather which reigns on the pass often resembles that of Brittany: drizzle, fog and freshness. After the pass, the road preserves this Armorican environment, with a profusion of bluish hydrangeas, down to Bourg Murat, the locality, which shelters the house of volcano. At the end of this rise of 35 kilometers, I advise you to stop there and start again the next morning with the rising sun. Indeed, the tops from Reunion reserve their splendours to those who get up early. Quickly the fog goes up and masks the relief's in the course of morning.

The forest road that I took the following day is well known from tourists. It leads 200.000 visitors to the volcano each year. Without stage, it is necessary to go directly to Pas des sables (2350 m). The sands plain lies under your amazed eyes. It is a black and ochre plateau, a mineral world born from fire; it is a true lunar landscape on earth.





Go down on the moon and follow the white markers until Pas de Bellecombe where begins Enclosure: this great horseshoe depression 9 kilometers in diameter, which blocks your progression. At the edge of the vertical 150 meters wall, you contemplate the crater of one of the most active volcanoes of our planet. But it is a “domestic” volcano. Hawaiian type, its eruptions are not very explosive, it produces very broad lava flows, which go down to the sea. The eruption is a natural spectacle to which natives crowd.

For the pass hunters, a mountain bike will enable you to offer a small variation by joining the GR. 2 and climb Lacroix Pass (2320 m). From there, return in the sands plain by the hiking path. Isolated, away from the road, you will have the impression to be the only alive being in this lunar landscape. You will have also the illusion to cross a virgin land. It is an unforgettable moment.



The clouds that come from the valley will indicate you that it is already time to leave. Nevertheless take time to stop to Commerson crater then to Nez de Boeuf that offers a splendid panorama on the river of the ramparts.

If you continue your visit on the island a 30 kilometer descent will allow you to join the sub-prefecture Saint-Pierre. I advise you nevertheless to make a detour on the direct line to turn right to Bois Court so as to admire the plunging viewpoint on Grand Bassin. From there go down towards the sea with a picturesque small road along Bras de la plaine through Pont d'Yves and Bras de Pontho.

For any travel advice to La Reunion, do not hesitate to contact me.

François CANDAU

## **4. Conclusion:**

If you have come back from Summer Holiday and have recommendations or useful tips that you want to share with other BIG members then send them to me ([helmuth@challenge-big.eu](mailto:helmuth@challenge-big.eu)) and I will publish them so other members can take advantage of that.

I can recommend the following ascents and cycle rents for instance after our summer holiday in Peru:

- You can rent an MTB in Chivay from Victor Hugo Isuiza. Here are the contact details:  
His shop can be found on the Plaza Armas in Chivay. It is located next to Lobo's Pizzeria.  
Email: [isupra-servicioturísticos@hotmail.com](mailto:isupra-servicioturísticos@hotmail.com) or [victorisuiza@hotmail.com](mailto:victorisuiza@hotmail.com)  
Telephone: 054-53181 fixed phone or 054-959860870 mobile phone  
In the Chivay area you can cycle:
  - From Chivay (3630m) to Patapampa pass (4850m), ~28km.
  - From Cabanaconde (3280m) to Cruz del Condor (3640m), ~4km.
- You can rent an MTB in Huaraz from Julio Olaza. Here are the contact details:  
His office, Mountain Bike Adventures, can be found at 530 Jirón Lucar y Torre in Huaraz. In case the office is closed you can ask on the second floor where Julio's wife runs "The Last minute gift store" which is open from 10am-1pm and from 4pm-8pm. It's the same building as where Cafe Andino is located in.  
Telephone: (51 43) 42 42 59 or cel ( 051 43) 943876231  
Web Site: <http://www.chakinaniperu.com/>  
email: [julio.olaza@terra.com.pe](mailto:julio.olaza@terra.com.pe)  
In the Huaraz area you can cycle:
  - From Carhuaz, start at Camp Ulta (3600m) to the Punta Olimpica (4890m), 22km long.
  - From Yungay, start at Llanganuco switchbacks (3750m) to Portochuelo Llanganuco (4750m), 20km long
  - Ask Julio if there are passes also in the Cordillera Negra. He mentioned these to me but I did not have enough time to cycle one of these. The above mentioned passes are in the beautiful Cordillera Blanca.

I hope these tips will inspire you to go to Peru and to take on a South-American challenge. Cycling at this altitude is breathtaking I can assure you.

Best regards,  
The newsletters team

François CANDAU  
Helmuth DEKKERS  
Daniel GOBERT  
Claudio MONTEFUSCO  
Piero ROTA  
Nico STAES