

Length of Sweden, Sverigetempot 2021

(a personal experience report by Frank Sent – F13)



2100km in 7 days and drive about 12,600 meters in altitude ? And still spend the night outside in a bivouac tent and sleeping bag? Admittedly, that sounds a bit crazy to me, but you want to improve ... No, actually, the Challenge was already planned last year, but had to be cancelled due to Corona. Also this year it will be tight, but it looks good, the organizer is optimistic that it can start on 2.7.21.

The challenge

The start is in Riksgränsen (the city is really called like that) in the very north of Sweden, 300km north of the polar circle and goes once through Sweden to Smygehuk (near Trelleborg).

Per day it means then approx. 300km drive with approx. 1,500-2000 elevator meters, i.e. means min. 12h in the saddle. Now I have already 2x 1000km at a stretch (with 2 nights each) behind me, but 6x in a row so overnight and have the equipment on the bike (bivouac tent, sleeping mat, sleeping bag) ... let's see what the body reports back ...

On the other hand, I'm looking forward to pure landscape on the loneliness in the vastness (at least north) of Sweden, on the many lakes and forests !

And I'm looking forward to having my thoughts focused on doing something good for the children and hopefully handing over a nice check (virtually). But for this I need your help !

You can find the link to the fundraiser here:

<https://www.betterplace.org/de/fundraising-events/37870-2100km-fuer-die-kinderkrebshilfe>



Preparation

Of course, you cannot drive such a distance from the stand "times evenly". Not so many road cyclists know what it means to sit in the saddle for 300km, for example, because it usually means 12 hours on the road, especially if there are 4,000 meters of altitude or more to overcome. For 3 years I ride longer distances, 2018 the "Race to Northsee Challenge" over 305km from Duisburg to the North Sea. But at that time with food stations (delicious). 2019 then the first 600er, where I learned a lot, because I was simply empty after 240km (wrong diet and too fast pace) but also experienced how a body regenerates yet and the 2nd half then went relatively "relaxed".

In the same year then the 1000km from Flensburg to Garmisch where I was unfortunately slowed down by a thunderstorm.

2020 was then already in the sign of the pandemic and so I have made there quasi "day events", once 600km in 24h and once an Everesting, 8848 meters of altitude. The blogs about it you can read here, just click on the menu on the desired page.

Well, now it's about doing such a 300km seven times in a row after spending the night outdoors. How do you prepare for it ? For Everesting there are actually some pages where you can find tips how to do it (and how to behave during the race). For the Sverigetempot there are reports of experiences, but no tips for preparation. In the end, everyone must decide for themselves. Certainly do many long bike rides, maybe even bikepacking with 1 or 2 nights in the open. And above all make a list with everything you will probably need, just think of everything !

As of 10.5. I have driven this year 6255km with 89,000 meters of altitude, am as quite well in the plan, but a few longer tours should now be added, I hope the weather will finally be consistently nicer (and maybe a little less wind if I may wish for something).

Among other things, I was allowed to build this year already on Tenerife something the early form, that was really a great experience, great routes, a lot of altitude and always good weather ...



update 15.5.21: now it has hit me hard :-(

On 14.5. I was already 157km on the road with the wheel as me 1.5km before home a car has taken the right of way and I had no chance to react. With 27.4km / h (you could see afterwards on Strava well) I'm rushed into the side and flew together with wheel (probably in Salto manner) over the hood and then somehow crashed on the road. The human protection mechanism fades out fortunately the crucial milliseconds, so that I remember only, how I lay afterwards on the road. Fortunately, I only suffered bruises and abrasions, which is almost a miracle considering the fall. The bike didn't come off so well, I thought at first there wasn't much to see, but then I saw the crack in the frame (down tube). The wheel was broken through once, but this is not surprising with the force of the impact.

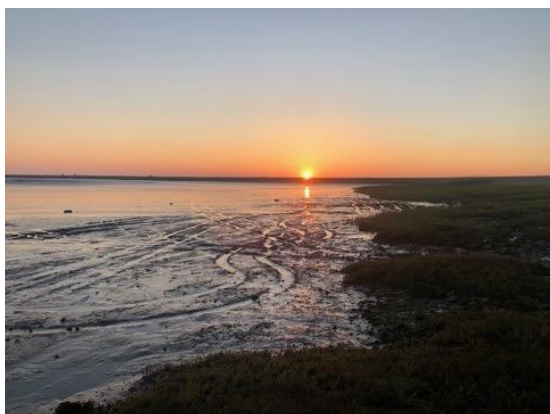


Above left that was still during the tour, in the middle then the broken frame and right part of my blisters. But the insurance has paid relatively quickly and uncomplicated, so I could already buy a new (gebrauchtes wheel). Actually, I wanted to continue riding Trek, but then I got the opportunity to upgrade, to electronic shifting (Ultegra Di2), disc brakes and wattmeter. So it has now become a Giant TCR Advanced Pro, weight without pedals 7.7kg !



Of course, I had to try this out promptly and so the first tours in the area were already lined up. Finally, the weather was better again, which was so far in Germany very modest ...

For Sweden, however, I now had to make several longer tours (> 200km) to get used to the extent. As soon as the weather seemed to become reasonably constant, so no large amounts of rain were foreseeable somewhere along the way, I'm out again. From last year I still had a nice route towards Bergen op Zoom, 90km along a canal in Belgium and for the first time with the bivouac tent on the road.



It was not so easy to find a reasonably windless corner, but towards evening the wind has fortunately decreased and so everything worked out well, including beautiful sunset on the Wadden Sea.

The way back of the 245km route was then, however, very exhausting. Actually, for both weekend days wind from the north was announced, but the has turned on Sunday to east / north-east and that was exactly the direction in which I had to. If I had on the way to the west still a 31 km/h average, it was on the way back just under 29 km/h. That's when I really missed my handlebar rest, which makes it easier to get into an aero position for long stretches and at the same time relieves the wrists, arm and shoulder muscles.

In Sweden I start with Björn from Aachen, who is as crazy as me (or maybe even crazier), who has already ridden Paris - Brest - Paris (1200km). Since he still had to book his flight, he noticed that we cannot get into Norway at all, because the country is only open for Norwegians because of Corona. The nearest airport to the starting point up in northern Sweden, however, is Narvik and so I had booked the flight there, including log cabin on the Lofoten, where I wanted to spend another 6 days. Through Björn I was only aware that 2 of the 3 flights were canceled by SAS and I had not received any notice.

So I had to reschedule and now I fly on 27.6. to Kiruna, which is about 150km from the start in Riksgränsen.

update 14.6.: yesterday I did another Sweden test, 360km and just under 3000 Hm through the Sauerland and back. The weather was just too good not to use it ! This time everything has also worked (technically) and also the condition is right. With an average of 28.5km / h I came quite well forward. Have also used the Gravelbike (with road bike tires) which I, equipped with handlebar support then also use in Sweden.

In the test last weekend, not everything went so smoothly, as I am actually driven according to regulations on the bike path, until it became so bumpy that I wanted to change to the road. I have probably overlooked a sharp edge in the grass hub, so I had a flat on both tires at the same time, a so-called snake bite. Of course, I had only one tube with me and the self-adhesive patches have unfortunately not held what they promise. A nice resident from the village then helped me with old yellowed patches from his stock and the ride could continue (at km 93 of 315). However, the wheels did not run round, because the coats have not settled properly in the rim. For this you sometimes need a lot of pressure and I could not build it up with my hand pump. So I rolled 20km to the nearest two-wheel store and there it could then be straightened. The day was also a challenge in terms of heat - for the first time 30 degrees in NRW ... but in the end even that worked out.

The prospects for Kiruna are currently not so exhilarating, the weather forecast extends to 29.6. and in that week the temperatures are at 11 degrees ... let's see how it still develops. The statement seems to me not very stable, that still changes quite often.

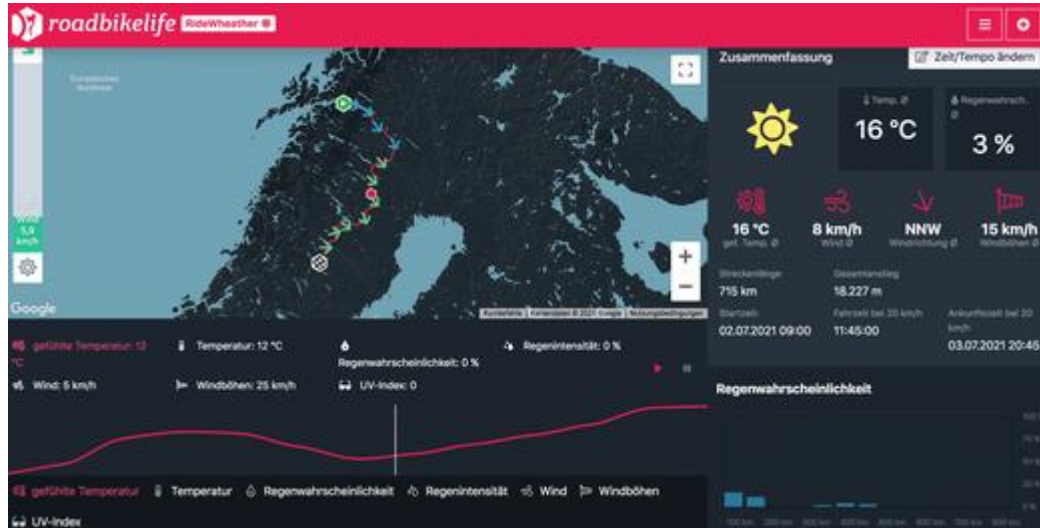
Update 26.6.:

One further test I wanted to do so I modified my Sauerland tour from last year so that it corresponds to a day stage in Sweden, about 360km and 3100 hm. It was glorious weather for driving (20-25 degrees, little wind) so it went quite well. 3 breaks, one of them a bit longer and a riding time of 12:37 so an approx. 28 km/h average - that was quite ok. In Sweden there are 12,600 hm on 2,100km as comparable to the Sauerland Tour, even a little less %/km.

In the last few days I got me a few things that are necessary or hopefully facilitate the trip. Björn has given me the tip for an ultralight sleeping bag, I already had a light (700g) but that was designed for 10 degrees comfort. That seemed a bit risky to me, as I had already spent the night with it at 3-5 degrees and that was not funny. Now I have a 385g light which has 5 degrees, that should be enough.

In addition, I have actually treated me to new shoes, because the old had suffered after the accident and through intensive use but. Now I have again lighter shoes, instead of 700g per pair now 500g. The 200g sound now not much, especially since you can work there better on your own body weight, but that's moving mass and that plays a role (similar to the rims, tube and coat). For the specialists: that's about 0.43W you save there ;-) At about 84h I will be on the road and about 400,000 crank revolutions that is almost half a bar of chocolate :-)) (yes I like physics ...)

For the transport I have decided to take a cardboard box, which I then dispose on site. With bike suitcase it would be difficult because I have to change location 2x before the tour. And on the way back by ferry and train (after arriving in southern Sweden) is also easier with bike only ...



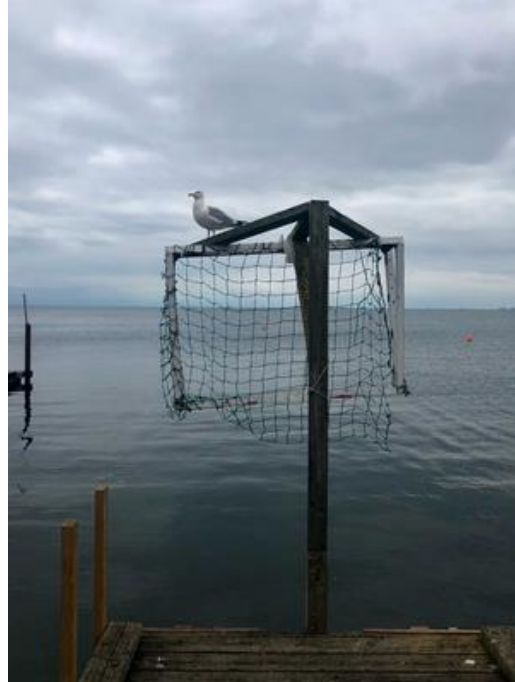
The last 10 days I have regularly looked at the weather forecast for Kiruna but what I saw was not always pleasant. Partly 11 degrees, rainy, but then again 18 degrees, dry... and so it changed quite often. But recently it has stabilized and now it even looks not bad at all !

There is a great site where you can calculate the weather along a longer route. You can see the picture for the first 700km above. Even the wind seems to come from the right direction ! Would be nice if it stays at least so similar !

Kiruna

After a long journey I finally arrived in Kiruna. In the morning at 8:00 o'clock departure towards Düsseldorf airport, arrival at the hotel in Kiruna at 21:30 o'clock. But the most important thing is that the bike arrived in one piece.

In Copenhagen I had a longer stay and I used it to explore the area a bit. Fortunately, it was not far to the Baltic Sea and so I could collect a few beautiful impressions.



Next stop was Stockholm and there was little time for the change, but fortunately they have managed to get my big wheel box also in time into the new plane. The approach to Girona was impressive, because the weather was good.



The airport in Kiruna is very small, there is exactly one baggage belt and there is no counter for bulky luggage. I was already wondering where to pick up my big bike box. But then it arrived already on the conveyor belt. After that I immediately started to put the bike back together and it all worked well and quickly. Unfortunately, I found that I had too little air in the front tire. I used extra light tubes but unfortunately my new hand pump does not fit on the valves and so I had to change the tube immediately. On the approach to Kiruna I was immediately allowed to make acquaintance with the fact that a large part of the city is being rebuilt, because there is a lot of mining and part of the city was demolished. Accordingly, there are some detours...

After I arrived at the hotel I first explored the city here the sun does not set, it is 300 km north of the Arctic Circle. Accordingly, the sun can be seen here even in the north!



Update 29.6.

Yesterday I rode my bike from Kiruna to Abisko. 100 km with 10 kg luggage on the back is not so pleasant but the landscape has compensated me. Which is also a new experience, when it goes 100 km always straight ahead. This will be on the tour of course more often the case and is what quite different than in Germany to drive.



On the way I actually met a cyclist, Marlene from Lyon. She was fully packed, because she is already on the road since April and has already covered 6000 km. Actually, she wanted like me also to Norway, but that did not work because of Covid-19. She told me that since June 24, the entry as a vaccinated would go again. It would have been enough for me, but two weeks ago no one could have guessed that... Too bad! But here in Abisko it is also beautiful!

In the evening I directly explored the national park and was thrilled! A very beautiful landscape, just the gorge but also the combination of mountain birch forest, heath and snow-covered mountains is already very beautiful. Today on 29.6. I have then directly planned a longer tour, 27 km across the park, to the Abeskjarvi.

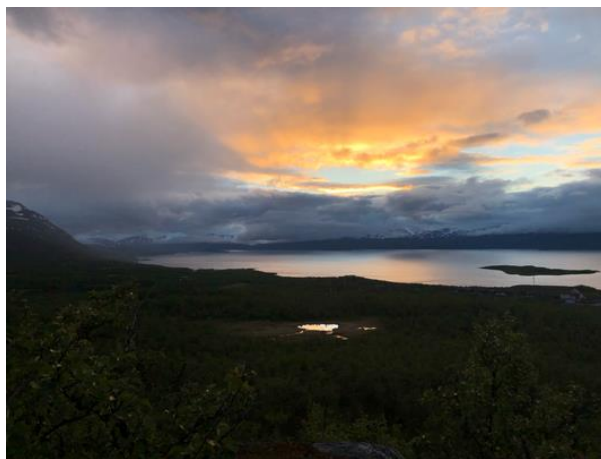
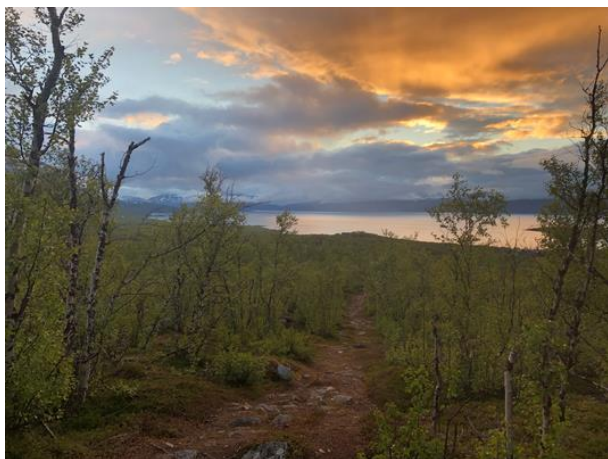
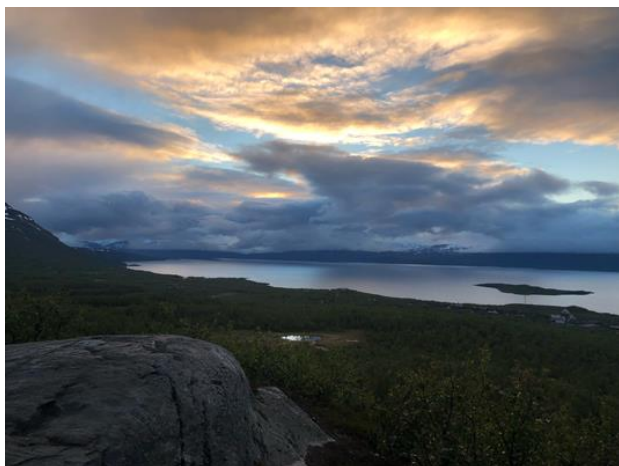




I have already met a few dropouts here, for example a couple from Switzerland who have taken nine months off from work and are now exploring Europe. Or a Swedish woman who quit her job four years ago and has been on the road ever since. Here, about 300 km north of the Arctic Circle, you naturally get other ideas and deal with nature more, because there are simply not so many people here.

By the way, the weather forecast is still promising! It should stay dry, very sunny, about 17° and the wind even comes from the north. Those would be really great conditions for the start. At the moment my plan is to ride through the first day as long as I can stand it and see how far I get. The first stopover where we also get a place to stay and a meal is at kilometer 950.

In the night I have still made a hike on a hill near Abisko (Paddus) with a beautiful view of the lake and with beautiful cloud pictures



Today, June 30, we go by bike in the direction of Norway. The border is open again since June 24 for fully vaccinated. Had this been known before, I would not have had to rebook my flight to the Lofoten, too bad but so it is in times of pandemic halt.

Today I got to know the other side of the Swedish summer. I crossed to Norway and had on the way partly 3 degrees, rain and headwind... was a good test for the clothes. But I hope that I do not need them during the tour!

So I was at the start of the tour in Riksgränsen. But it was not really comfortable at that time. For Friday, fortunately, better weather is predicted!

I actually wanted to go further into Norway but it was not really worth it in the weather and 100km are also enough just before the start ...

Unfortunately, I had bad luck again or I was once inattentive and have not properly closed the bag in which the GoPro camera was. The then fell out and now is a crack in the glass of the lens so that the recordings are now impaired. It goes but is annoying - you really have to have all your senses together when you're so on the road 😞



Now the first riders arrive at the accommodation. The nervousness rises but slowly although it is not a race. Let's see how many drivers will actually start. The majority will probably start tomorrow to have more time.

For me it goes tomorrow in the direction of Riksgränsen and on Friday at 9 o'clock it starts. I'll be glad when I'm finally on the road and hopefully have everything I need with me.

Update 1.7.21

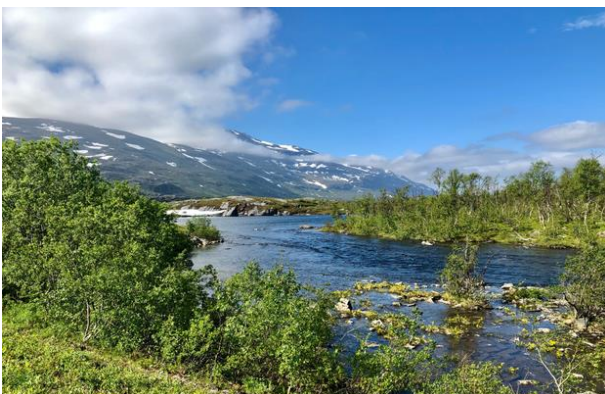
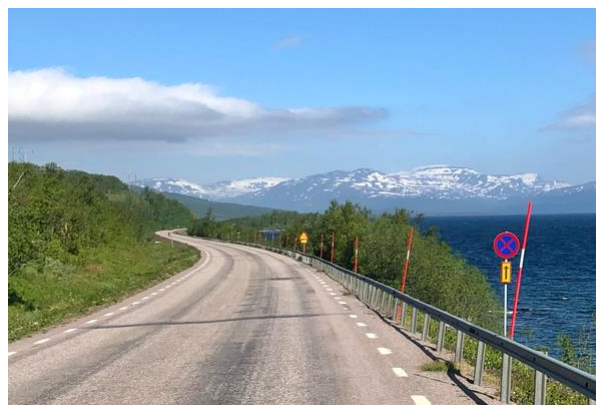
Yesterday evening I made a small hike of 8km, I had to buy anti mosquito repellent and it was only available at the tourist station at the lake. The Abisko River which flows into the Torneträsk Lake cuts there a beautiful canyon in the landscape.

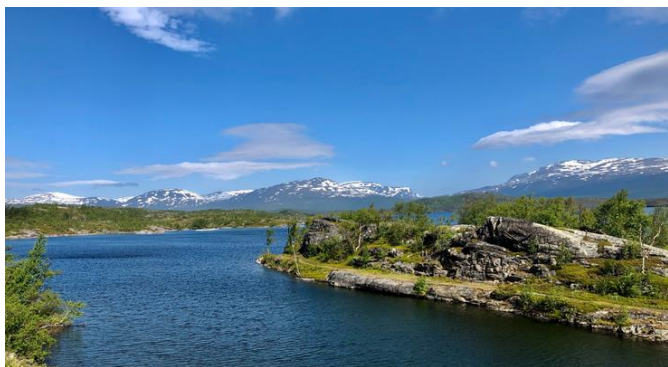
I had also considered whether I still go to the 1100 m high mountain south of it (with the lift) but the sky had too many clouds as that it would have been worthwhile...





So today the last stage before the start tomorrow morning. Again from Abisko to Riksgränsen. Again with all luggage on board, fortunately I do not have to carry the 10kg backpack over the tour on the back ! The weather is top today, the starters of the 1st group came to meet me - they were happy about 15km/h tailwind - I hope we will have some tomorrow ... For me, it was first more strenuous than normal but I had only 37km.





Here the first riders arrive and it becomes clear how different the approaches and the bikes are...



Just met Christian and Magnus - my neighbors here at Arctic Lodge. They told me that the route does not have as many meters of altitude as the track on "ride with GPS". I have uploaded the track to Komoot and wondered that only 12,600 meters of altitude were displayed there. That would be of course not bad!

The two start Saturday and want to drive non-stop to Östersund - that's 950km. Christian managed Paris Brest Paris 2019 in 51h (1200 km) !

Max is another fellow rider, he also starts on Friday. He has already ridden the Transcontinental (4200km in 14 days) and rides a Fixi (he has only 1 gear !).

Some have booked fixed accommodations, some are looking for something spontaneous and others like me sleep outside! The problem will be the mosquitoes - let's see if my means what I bought yesterday still helps against it.

Otherwise, I still have my bivouac tent with mosquito net ...

The first 500km it looks not bad from the wind but then he turns to south ☹️ well let's see.



Now I also got my race number, it is the number 13 and that is also printed upside down - let's hope that it brings luck!

For the last night I have booked a decent accommodation, even with a view!



19:30 - again the obligatory portion of pasta eaten to fill up the carbohydrate stores - the pasta party was canceled because of Corona ...

Day 1

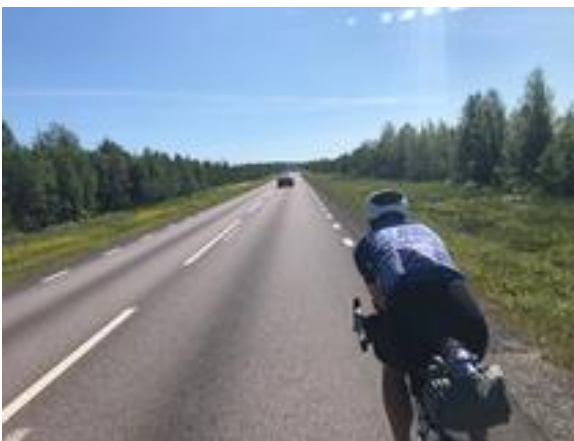
2.7.21, 9:00 Start !



The first 100 km are done, we are super on the road, the tailwind has helped. We have an average of 36 KMH!



First control point in Kiruna at kilometer 125. We get the opportunity to either go through the city or take the new main road around the city. We decide for the latter one as it is faster and I have seen the city already. I'm on the road with Gerald from Berlin. We proceed very well. The tail wind has helped, so we are making good progress. Of course we want to take advantage of that as long as we can.



Update at 14:30 193 km done, 5 hours and 18 minutes on the road, we are still fine, the weather is great, the sun is shining and the wind is still favorable!



In a moment it is 16:00, we are at kilometer 237 and suddenly there was a turn! The first turn on the course. We are now a little more than six and a half hours on the road, still a 36 KMH average. Slowly it gets a little warm but as long as we are so fast on the road, the wind cools. Right at kilometer 250 there will be a lunch break.



So, after almost 250 km and 7 hours of riding the first real break with pizza and coke and in Sweden there is always a cabbage salad added ...

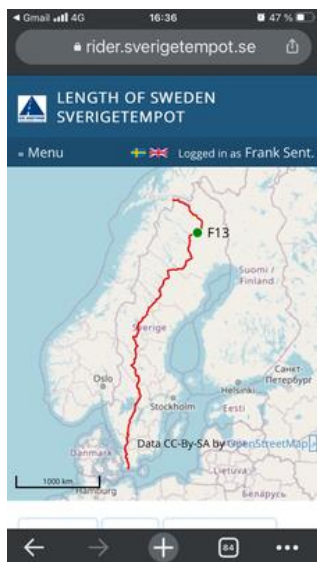
We are now here in Gällivari the mining town of Europe (according to the sign ...)

You can also see photos under #sverigetempot2021 on Instagram ...



17:10, we are back on the bike now heading west i.e. we no longer have a tailwind but afterwards we continue south again.

The landscape here is not very varied now therefore there are not many new pictures. Always a mixture of deciduous and coniferous forest and roads that are almost untraveled.



Pause at kilometer 294, time to eat an ice cream and drink a lätt oil (light beer) as they say here in Sweden. Now it is shortly after 17:00 and we continue.

In a moment we are at kilometer 300 a little over 8 hours and 30 minutes. As expected, the average has dropped a bit because we now had 50 km headwind. Now it goes again more in southern direction. The sun is already quite noticeable but as long as you drive it is ok.



The first reindeer sighted after about 9 hours of driving and 320 km. We have now 7:45 p.m.

20:30, we have arrived at the second checkpoint: Jokkmokk

Km 342. Now the temperatures are slowly getting more comfortable and the shadows longer. ...



Here the reindeer a little bigger ;-)



Now probably comes the place where there is no supply for 150 km, i.e. once again fill up all supplies. For me, that means primarily water. I still have so much food in the backpack that is enough until tomorrow ... Kilometer 410, exactly 12 hours on the bike, 14 hours on the road. 2150 meters altitude, short break at a very nice place where you can watch the midnight sun.



We just saw a reindeer again. It stood on the road quite long time and then run away in the last moment. Now it is 23:15 and we still think how long we drive ...

00:30: we found a nice place to sleep - after 442 km and 2412 meters of altitude, 13h in the saddle and just an average of 34km/h. **That was a hammer day!**

Day 2

4:00 o'clock in the morning on 3 July: I am already awake, could hardly sleep, on the one hand because of the mosquitoes although I had a remedy against it. On the other hand, however, probably because of the rushing river we have here directly at the rest area and which is just too loud for me. The sun bangs already again quite properly!

We are on at 4:55 after a short "night". I think I slept 2h ...



6:40: Now we are standing here with 4 other drivers waiting for the café to open at 7:00 ...

Time for a retrospective:

Good was yesterday in any case that I have met Gerald from the start group and we are driving together since then. We are a "performance class" therefore it fits quite well, he rides even more bike than me ! In addition, the wind was of course to 2/3 our friend so that we have come to this great cut. And we have seen 2 reindeer ! In addition, the evening or night sun was very nice !

Not so good was that I had not put 2nd skin in time and therefore my budd is quite red now. Most annoying are the mosquitoes and knots when you stand (as now).

Do better: we unfortunately rushed by the sign "polar circle", we have not noticed too late. It around about km 350.

Today I notice the back already more, let's see if that settles during the ride ...
We nearly managed 500km now

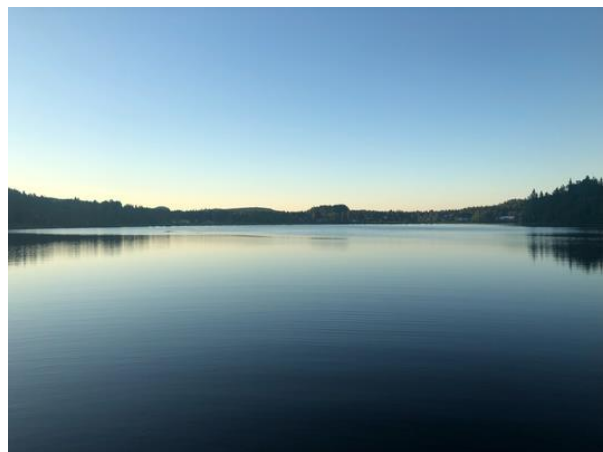


Meanwhile, it is 12:30 and we have already 30 ° (in the shadow) well noticed that we always ride in the sun. Therefore, it was time for a cooling in a lake. So the we took the next best lake which was reasonably on the way and jumped into the water wiht the cycling shorts. And of course immediately the critters come and disturb one again ...

Lunch break at 14:10, first a cool beer for 8 (!) € and something “real” to eat. Meanwhile, we have 37 degrees in the sun - plus headwind ... so the day yesterday was definitely more fun. Today we went 210km and 1150 hm in 7h - in total we are at 652km 3570 meters of altitude and about 20h in the saddle (29h on the road)

We will probably now first make siesta and then maybe at 16 or 17 clock continue ...
Well, so beautiful the day was yesterday so “used” it is today. Disturbing flying animals whenever you stop somewhere, my sunburn which is really noticeable at 37 degrees in the sun (yes I know myself to blame). 2 punctures, one at Gerald, one at me (very annoying because there would have been a detour around the gravel road and thus my expensive Aerothan tube broke) And of course the headwind which is a constant companion. Have just managed a 28.5 km/h average today ...

Now at 18:15 we are almost at km 700





Today we still managed 360km and so we are at a good 800km in total at about 4200 hm. The beginning and the end today was good the middle part just too hot! Therefore, we have also made longer siesta and today only managed 11:15h in the saddle (yesterday 13h).



Now we have at 23 o'clock and our overnight campsite is located directly on the lake. Have already built up my bivouac tent in the hope then to have peace before the critters ...

Day 3

Sunday morning 4.7., The night was very good - have slept 5.5h and so we started only at 6:45 on. Still 100km to Östersund, the middle station, where there is food, shower and the possibility to sleep in a real bed (which we will not make use of)

8:30, we have done the first 50km and are now in Strömsund - first breakfast!



Östersund

12:35 after a brisk 100km we arrived in Östersund at km 950. The temperatures are already back at 27 degrees ... we arrived a little before the official opening at 13:00 but still we could enter the rooms on the first floor of the building. My first activity was to find a charging place for my power bank then to take a refreshing shower and after that have a big portion of spaghetti – very tasty ! Of course we met Max and Sven again who started with us on Friday but also some other riders. Also Robert who had to quit as he got knee problems. After around 1,5h we continued.

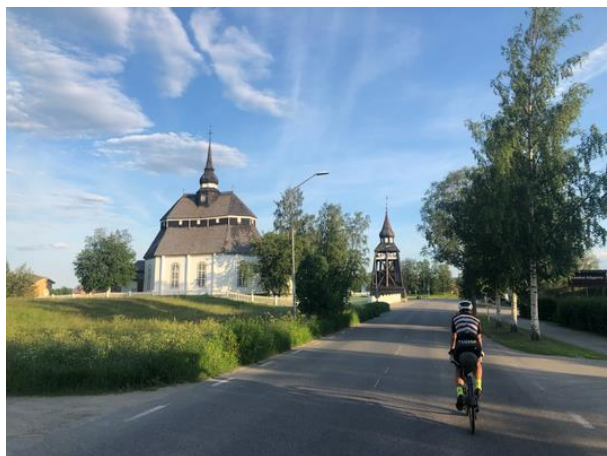
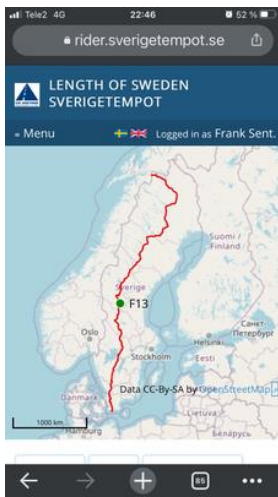


Half Time

Today 4.7.21 at 19:00 o'clock we have had half time, 1050km (plus 4 km detour) in 34:25h. After that the first really exhausting part came, it was the first time about 200 meters altitude at a stretch at 5-7% up. And there were a few more climbs. Within 270km we had 2200 meters of altitude today and with the headwind all the time we only got a 28 km/h average for today. After 34 km/h on Friday and yesterday 30 km/h



22:40 - arrived in the destination for the day: Sveg - phew that was exhausting today! 2200 meters of altitude on 270km and then another 250m on 50km always through the forest - of course with headwind...



Now we just have to find a place to sleep and then from tomorrow it is only 960km left 😊
Actually, here in Central Sweden there should be less flying animals but so far I didn't notice...



Retro: Today once again was a day with a lot of headwind and that is especially frustrating when it always goes in the same “wrong” direction.

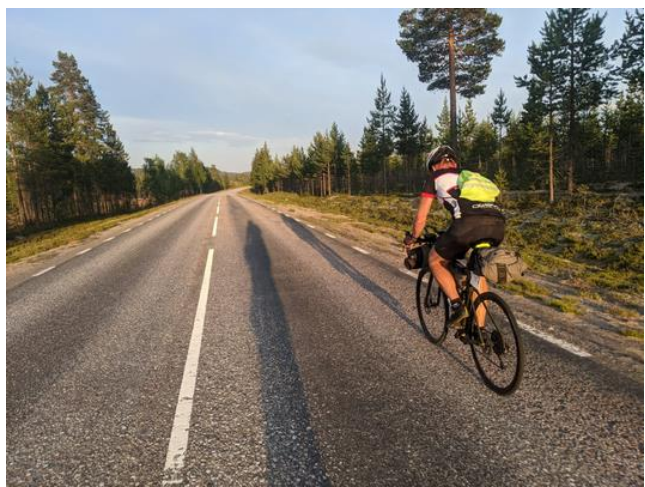
In Östersund after km 950 there was then the possibility to shower, change clothes and eat a decent portion of pasta. Of course we did that and so we continued at 14:15 further to the south. After Östersund finally there was civilization again, you saw houses, farms – and people! This was hardly the case for 950km. And the eye finally got different stimuli again - you realize then how important that is when you don't have that for hours or days !

In Östersund we met Max and Sven again, who started with us but are riding solo. Max is on a single speed bike on the road! That's ok on the flat but when it gets hilly it's really exhausting... And Sven is also alone on the road - both we meet every now and then at a checkpoint although they are not as fast as we are. They just ride much longer and sleep less - mostly only 1h per night. Accordingly, they have caught up on sleep in Östersund!

Sven is very minimalistically on the road and always looks for a warm place e.g. toilet or station to have a power nap.

Gerald and me, however, are always outside with sleeping mat and sleeping bag (and I still with small bivouac tent against the mosquitoes).

Now there are a few pictures with me in action - thanks to Gerald !





Day 4

5.7, 5:00 a.m. alarm clock ... I slept 4h, luckily there is a gas station right nearby where we can drink coffee! The next one open would be 114 km away !

Yesterday the moment when we reached the 1047km was special for me because that was the distance from Flensburg to Garmisch (which I did in 2019), back then it took 6:25h longer ...

10:20: Already 110 km done today. First time 2nd breakfast in a quaint café in Älvdaken.

At km 1212 (beautiful number 😊) we have climbed a "peak" -692m.

Then followed an almost 30km descent where we have destroyed again 400hm.

Weather is like the last two days, wind from the south, south-east 😞

So again headwind but what can you do ...

Worst is my butt, I had already problems yesterday since I had forgotten to apply second skin in time. Then changed pants after showering and that was probably not such a good idea ...





15 o'clock lunch break at km 1360. Now we also had the first summer rain, has been sudden and heavy ! Today was once again a mix of emotions. My butt was not well yesterday and unfortunately it was not better this morning at the start. At kilometer 160 I could no longer bear that situation and have again applied the cream. After another 15 minutes it was at least bearable again. The temperatures are now again modest, around 23 ° but the headwind has remained. You have the feeling that it is still strengthened by the aisles in the forest, where the road leads along. And since it goes exactly in the direction of south east, we have the wind always beautifully from the front. Today it is often cloudy and we wait till the second rain front passes by.

It was a nice moment when a vehicle from Germany drove past us and cheered on my companion (who probably has a lot of followers on Strava).

Today again we made 350 km, so now 1500 km are completed with 9200 meters of altitude. There are still 600 km to go. I hope my butt tomorrow will be a little better so that driving no longer hurts so much. Or I try it with two pants ...



Since km 1400 I am riding on my own. Gerald decided to go his own pace and wanted to fix some things. It is different if you go in a (small) group or if you are on your own. Both have pros and cons ...

22:30 - I found a cozy place at the lake where I can spend the night:



Day 5

6:30 in the morning – start for the last 600 km.

10:45 - the first 100 km behind me ... a total of now 1600km with 9800 meters of altitude, 53:10h in the saddle. So far the statistics.

Alone it is of course different to drive than in a group, of course I do not proceed as fast but am still at a daily average of 28.6 km/h but now the track is also a little flatter.

On your own you don't have to do compromises and arrange yourself with others and can concentrate on yourself - after 3.5 days in a group that is something different and for sure an experience you should make !

Currently I'm on the Südgötlandweg - quite nice here, similar to the Eifel in Germany 😊 Only the typical vallun red houses make you realize that you are in Scandinavia. Now while standing I notice how piercing the sun is again - while driving you do not notice it so much. The wind as usual is coming from SW... still 200km for today in front of me ...

As it looks like I am lucky this time – I am just in the lunch break after 150km daily distance, as suddenly a strong summer rain comes across! Have used the opportunity to refresh myself in the bathroom of the pizzeria ...



The 2nd pants works to some extent but with that butt I could also be accepted in a baboon family without problems 😊

But I'm making good progress and think that I manage the daily target of 300km also solo.

Today I passed by Jonathan. He started on Saturday and had the goal to stay under 100h.... he looked like a ghost at that time as he did not sleep much and he felt very tired (at the end I got to know that he managed 100:53h – a new record on the track !) ...

For me it will be somewhere around 132h gross and 71h net, if I continue like this.

Update 21:00: My butt and I have persevered and fought the wind all day! Almost all day 10-17km/h wind from the direction where I had to go of course. It was hardest on a former railroad track of almost 80km length. Actually beautiful to drive but ...



In any case, I have covered 1812 km now and have to go 309km tomorrow again.

After I did some shopping for food and drinks it started to rain. Luckily I found a summer arbor at the lake and I am glad that I have a roof (even with electricity) over my head! That would have been no fun with my little bivouac tent. It was a very comfortable night 😊



Today I met 3 riders on the road - Jonathan I mentioned already, the one heading for the record. The other two - Johan and Karl - two brothers from Sweden. We met them on the way from time to time. Now at km 1760. they were very minimalistically on the road, a garbage bag as a sleeping bag replacement and nothing else. That was of course hard at night and so they went to the hotel on the 4th night...

The Swedes have funny names for places: Siberia, Skottlandia ... but I liked Gammelgarden best 😊

What can I draw as an intermediate conclusion so far? So a bit you have the feeling that you had to pay for the first really good day for four days. That is of course a bit exaggerated but four days headwind for one day tailwind is also not really fair. Of course it depends on what you make out of it. But if you have the goal to get ahead reasonably fast, then headwind is not helpful. Even if the time is secondary in the end, I think every starter has an idea of when he or she wants to arrive. At least in the course of the days one calculates different scenarios.

For me, seven days were planned, but now I would only need 5.5 If nothing critical happens, I should arrive at my destination tomorrow late afternoon.

Why do you do such a long distance trip? The question is always asked and besides the usual answers like adventurousness, going to one's own limits, I noticed that there is another effect. It is comparable to a fasting cure or a purification cure, but not for the body but for the mind, for the brain. During such a ride, the body and the mind are at some point in their emergency program and only do the important things: breathing, kicking, eating, drinking. And the mind no longer thinks about all sorts of things but is busy, at least for me, with the calculation of any times or average values or arrival times ...

I would like to thank all readers of the block at this point, because it was or is always motivating for me to formulate something and write what you are interested or could be interested in. Also these thoughts help to overcome some monotonous distance.

Of course, I also hope that the children with cancer for whom I do the fundraiser again, also get to know something from this blog and get an idea of what it means to be on the road for so long by bike. Last time they got a smart trainer as a present and I would like to show them how to ride a virtual route. That will certainly motivate them more than just paying attention to heart rate and cadence.

Day 6

5:10 on the Road again ...

8:00 finally I can get a coffee in the Coop! Here there are no bakeries like in Germany that open at 6 or 7 😊
But this coffee was for free because the cash registers did not work 😊



9:25 - I have just cracked the 1900 km mark! I am now 64 hours in the saddle. I still have about 7 hours ahead of me plus breaks. To start earlier this morning was the right decision, because the wind is still weak and it riding is a little easier.

Arrived at the last control station at kilometer 1933, the town is called Laholm. Now it is still 180 km. Probably I make two more breaks after 60 km each and then that's it... Today it is cloudy. The temperatures are tolerable but the wind freshens up again and comes as always from the same direction. I read yesterday that in Sweden because of the location the wind comes mostly from south west. If I had known that before...

On the way I met Amy, she is from America and married to a Swede, with whom she is also on the tour. However, they agreed that they would not ride together. That was probably a wise decision ☺ But they always stayed in hotels which they booked in advance – another strategy how to manage that distance ! They already started on Thursday.

13:35 - I have completed the 2000 km, about 12,200 meters in altitude and have been in the saddle for 67 hours, 124.5 hours in total. Now still 120km to the finish ...



18:35 – I Made it ! Finally arrived after the last 120km have dragged on so long! I thought I can now enjoy the last km but then another 750 m of altitude and the usual headwind which was even stronger because the sun came out again.

Well in the end it has become 2125.25 km (instead of 2115) and 12550 meters of altitude – in total 72h22min driving time and gross 5d 9h 35min or 131.5h So I am pleased with that - there were 7 days planned...

Now I will first have a shower, eat something and then I continue to write!

The day after

After 7h sleep, 2 coffees and cereal I am refreshed and the recovery phase starts ☺ Even the butt is a better now but yesterday at the end it felt relatively well already or the brain simply fades certain pain signals.

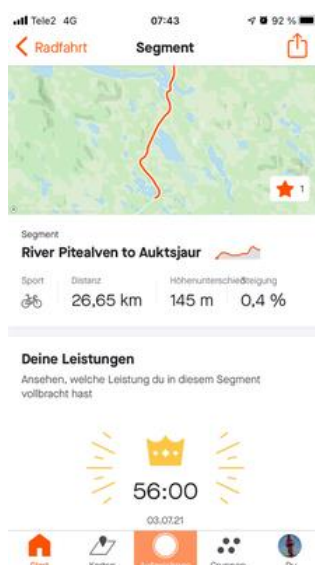
The last 250 km I rode almost in one go, only 1x 10 min break for an ice cream and the stop for the control. That's why the last 120km were probably harder for me than if I had done lunch break properly. But towards the end you look at the clock and think, hm I can still stay under e.g. 130h ... Nobody (or hardly anyone) cares but it is always a compromise between enjoyment and speed at such kind of events.

Here there were these two groups: those who had already booked the hotels in advance and have driven 7 stages and those who are aiming for a top time, sometimes sub 100h ! This is only possible with very little sleep, 8-10h over 3 nights.

I myself had 5 nights with about 22h sleep - so not too little. Accordingly I finished in the middle between the fast and the enjoyers ...

Again a few race data for those who are interested (see picture below). The fast group with little total hours (about 114h) could of course not drive so fast because the body did not get enough rest in between (sleep). One group has first driven the 935 km non-stop, then 3-4h sleep then 300km, then hotel with 4-5h sleep and then the remaining approx. 900km - the goal was consciously to go to the limit ... with the usual side effects that you start to hallucinate at some point ... some funny stories that arise due to that effect but also dangerous as you are not at 100% control during that time.

I even got the KOM (King of the Mountain) on a 26km segment 😊 but I think up there in the north drive there is not that much competition ...



Out of approx. 110 persons who started 43 finished by this morning, some are still on the way like e.g. Geraldine from France which we had overtaken on Saturday with km 320 ...

At the finish we were allowed to use a real bed in the youth hostel, (STF Vandarhem) where there used to be a lighthouse station





So far we got 820€ of donations ! Many thanks to all who have participated !
 My goal was to achieve 1€ per each km...
 Please forward again to friends and acquaintances (link is at the top of the blog).

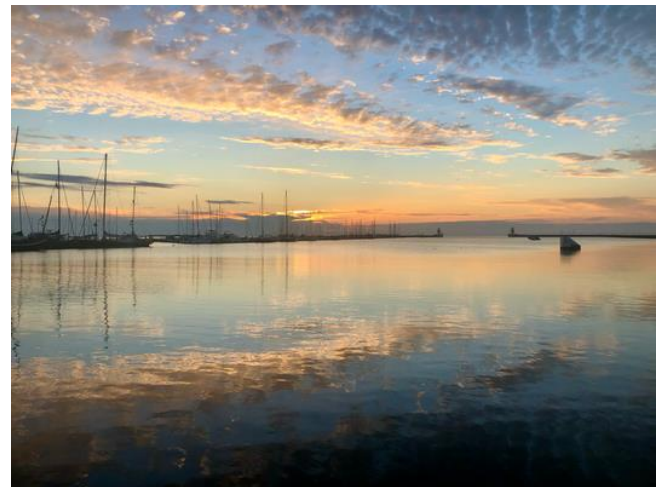


I also try to motivate the newspaper to report from the event...

22:00 - meanwhile I moved to Höllviken. That is 30 km further west and has the advantage that there is also a beach and it looked as if you have somewhat more alternatives than in Smygehuk.

Unfortunately, I had to realize yesterday evening that my body has suffered a bit during the 6 days. The legs have probably stored some water - in any case I cannot properly squat. I'll keep an eye on that. I've heard that you can get relief by putting your legs up or taking a cold shower. Now I also understand that a cyclist colleague has complained about it and has always put his legs up at dinner... I also have the usual tingling in my toes again, but that goes away with the weeks. Luckily I have no tingling in the fingers because my body seems to got used to these tours.

I made a nice walk in the surroundings, seems to be a residential area for the better-off citizens, because there are really very nice houses and also very different. Here, the bureaucracy does not seem to intervene as much as in our country, where you always have to adhere to certain specifications. I walked to the beach on the other side of town. There was a very beautiful sunset.



9.7.21: this morning the legs are working better, I can squat better, so everything is going in the right direction. Today it is time for the beach. The wind ironically comes from the north east, which we could have used quite well two days earlier ...

There are already ideas for a new tour, the colleagues have some experience and created my appetite. For example there is the traditional event London Edinburgh London or short LBL. It is mainly on small roads over the countryside and the checkpoints are not at gas stations but in castles! It is also only 1500 km ;-)



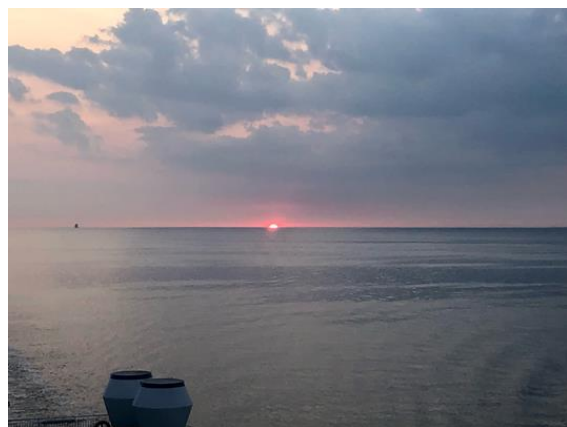
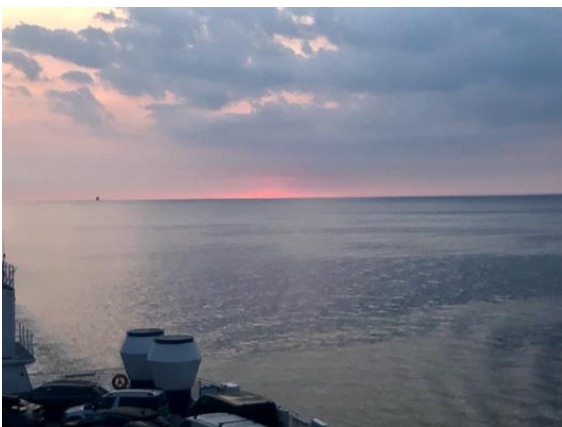
Another anecdote about my lucky number, the 13. It was printed upside down on my lable and that was on purpose, because that is done at the Tour de France just the same way. Apparently they want to avoid that the 13 brings bad luck. With me it has brought at least no misfortune, so it has worked 😊

I am on my way home. Sweden actually says goodbye to me with a tailwind - on the way to Trelleborg to the ferry.

Unfortunately, the weather the last two days was not too good but it was good to get down and relax with audio book and reading!

I took the night ferry from Trelleborg to Rostock. Costs with bicycle only 25€. Tip: just take your sleeping mat with you in the passenger area - there is always a place to sleep. Alternatively, you can now rent a so-called pod, that is a sleeping box with electricity.

Since I could not sleep well I enjoyed the clear sunrise:





Getting home

13.7.21 - I still have fluid in the legs. I do not know if it is because of the trip or because I was the last five days little active. In any case, the glance yesterday morning on the scale was not very positive: Have gained 7 kg compared to before the vacation 😞

My return trip with the ICE train was not so successful in the end: at a stopover in Osnabrück, the train had to stop longer and there was the announcement that it probably continues at 23:25. So I wanted to get something to eat in the station and when I was back at 23:17 the train left without me! With my luggage, my bike, my cell phone and my reading glasses... That was a shock moment and I didn't know what to do at first. Then I found someone who lent me his cell phone and typed in the service number of the German railroad, which I could no longer read myself and the service then told the train staff of the ICE that they take care of my clothes. So that was then delivered at the terminus in Cologne and fortunately there was still an IC train driving in that direction, at 0:40 clock. So I was in Cologne at 3:15 clock and could receive my equipment. Everything was complete, nothing was missing. Then I took the train back to Düsseldorf at 3:50 o'clock and was finally at home at 4:45 o'clock