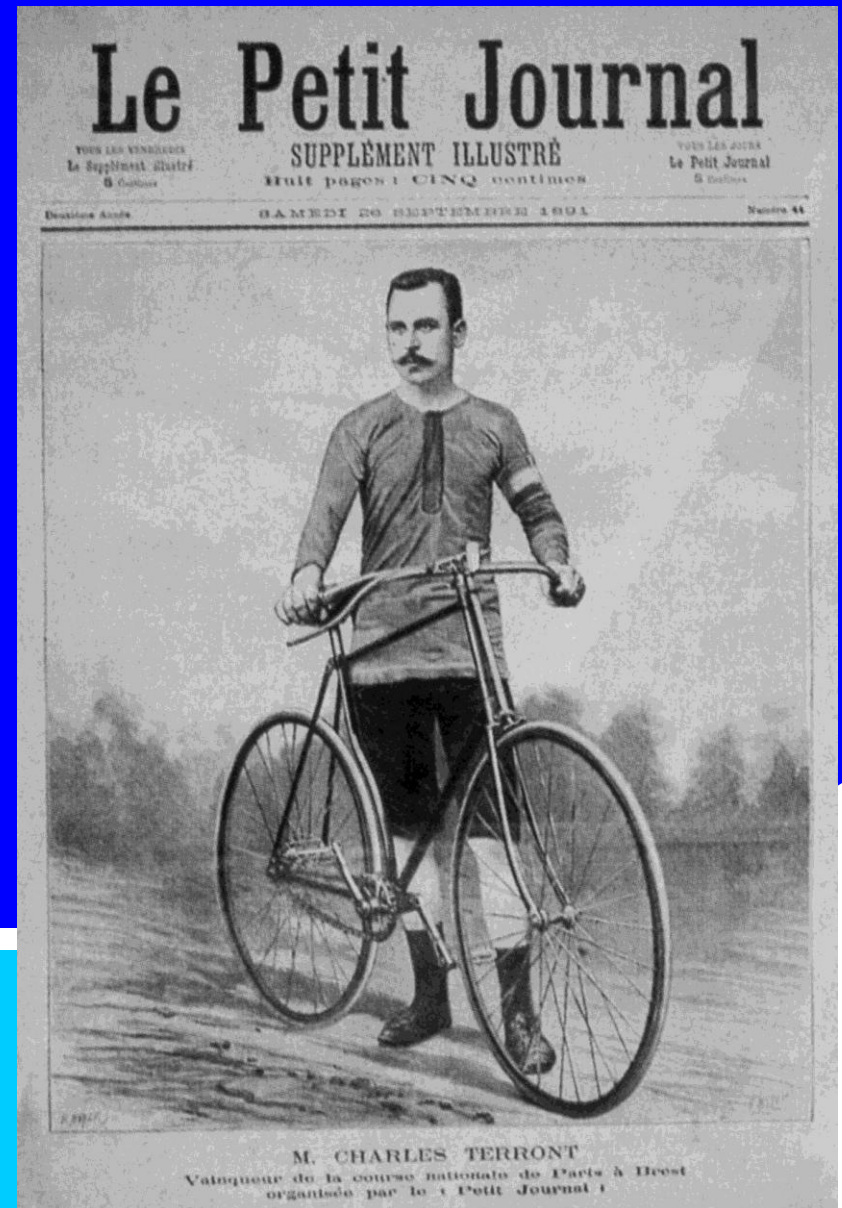


# Paris Brest Paris

*Things to know  
before you go*

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# Audience and Purpose

While this presentation is primarily intended for first time entrants, if you're an *ancien* you might also find this material helpful

*Purpose of this presentation is to help you:*

- **Be successful and finish PBP**
- Form a mental picture of what to expect in France and on the route
- Gain information so that you can plan now, rather than react once you're there
- Avoid problems that could potentially lead to abandoning –having knowledge of what to expect greatly increases ones chances of finishing
- Benefit from some 'school of hard knocks' experience
- Gain insights into the race history, cultural differences and what it's like riding in a country where cyclists are truly 'equals on the road'
- Overcome one of the biggest obstacles in the past to Americans finishing– riding in an unfamiliar place on unfamiliar roads without having a good idea of what to expect
- **I believe an hour spent studying and mentally preparing can be worth more than a full week of riding in enhancing ones chances of finishing PBP**

*Disclaimer:*

This is intended to be a help to first time PBP riders and much of the material is a result of my experiences, which are most likely somewhat different than anyone else's, but the information should be relatively consistent with what others would also experience

It is impossible to even begin to describe the many facets of a ride of the proportions and history of PBP, but I hope that this information is helpful in some way to a successful finish at PBP



# Points of Discussion

- Short history of PBP
- Guyancourt
- Start/finish at the *Gymnase des droits de l'home*
- Time table of registering and getting to the start line
- Bike check on Sunday
- Starting group strategy
- Tradition and something new
- Lining up at the pre-start
- Starting and 1<sup>st</sup> 50 miles
- Finishing times
- Control towns
- Rest stops/controls
- Sights along the way
- Villaines-la-Juhel control
- Your control book
- Brest or Bust
- Breton language
- On the road
- Route following
- Along the route
- Bike equipment
- Weather
- Route changes for 2011
- Language proficiency
- Cultural considerations
- Bike terminology
- Finish in Guyancourt
- Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines
- A French description of PBP

The content is one person's perspective and lessons learned that may be of help to you in finishing in 2011. There are so many dimensions to the ride that make it special – the history, the culture, the people, the bikes and France itself.





# Short one slide history of PBP

- PBP is the oldest of the “classics” – 1891, compared to Milano San Remo (1897), Paris- Roubaix (1893).
- **Precursor to the Tour de France and 12 years older**
- In 1891 *Le Petit Journal* organized the first Paris-Brest-Paris. Pierre Giffard, head of the paper, promoted the 1200km race **to demonstrate the practicality of the bicycle.**
- Charles Terront won the race, riding without sleep for 71h22m with an average of 17.59 kph on the way out and 16.78 on the way back. He rode on some of the first tires made by the brothers Michelin, who used his success to promote their new removable tires. The last finisher completed the course in 245 hours (10 days)
- In 1901 American Charly Miller finished in 56:40. His feat is all the more remarkable because he first had to travel to New York, travel to Europe by ship, travel to Paris, regain some fitness before PBP, complete the ride, take the ship back to the US and then travel back home – an incredible journey compared to today’s travel.
- In 1931 a fundamental change came to PBP. While still a very prestigious professional race, the organizers dropped the category for the unglamorous *touristes-routiers*. **Luckily for today's randonneurs, the Audax Club Parisien stepped in and organized a 1200-kilometer brevet run alongside the race with a 96 hour time limit. 80 riders also did the audax event.**
- In 1948 a new rule required randonneurs to ride the whole course on the same bike. Manufacturers competed for rankings based on the times of their 3 fastest riders.
- 1948 and 1951 were the last pro category races, as the randonneuring event became more successful. Bikes could not be changed and had to be equipped with lights and a frame number. The route card had to be validated and following vehicles were forbidden.
- **The event was planned as a professional race in 1956 and 1961, but cancelled due to lack of interest. The cyclo tourists, however, rode as usual with both a Audax and a Randonneurs edition being organized.** Unfortunately the tide was waning; only 250 registered and 220 started on September 05th near the pub *Aux trois obus*.
- As interest in PBP among the professional racing world died out in the years following World War II, the amateur versions-both *randonneur* and *audax*-would keep PBP very much alive. **There have been ACP Paris-Brest-Paris Randonneurs events in 1931, 1948, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007.**
- PBP in its present form is no longer considered one of the racing classics, however, since pros haven’t raced it since 1951 and are now not allowed to ride it.
- 1956 had both audax and randonneur events. 1971 was the last year shared by audax and randonneurs in the same year until 1991. 328 audax riders, split into 17 groups, started 4 days before the main PBP at 04:00 and all finished inside 90 hours. The 325 randonneurs set off with a massed start at 16:00 on Monday September 6th in the first Paris-Brest-Paris managed by Robert Lepertel. **Route arrows were used for the first time.** 8 riders did both the audax and randonneur events.
- In 1975 1<sup>st</sup> time riders were required to complete a 600k qualifying ride, *anciens* were required to complete a 400k qualifier. **Afterwards, the ACP allowed European countries to organize their own brevets.**
- **In 1979 the Super Randonneur series of qualifying brevets was required. 3 starting times were offered.**
- In 1983 the duo **Herman De Munck** (Belgian) and Bernard Piquet (from CT Montferrandais) finished together in 43h24, in front of the 1,903 successful riders. They had ridden alone from Villaines la Juhel. Following them were Fantino, Sauret, Poncin, and **Scott Dickson**-the first American to finish that year. They arrived in 44h40. The first woman to finish was **Susan Notorangelo.** **The BRM was created and countries around the world were allowed to organize qualifying brevets.**
- In 1987 2597 started. First back in Rueil-Malmaison, ahead of 220 Americans, **Scott Dickson finished with the fastest time. He repeated this feat for the following two events. American rider, Kay Richson was the first woman to finish, in less than 62h.**
- In 1995, the 13th PBP randonneur, organized by a similar commission to that of 1991 lead by Robert Lepertel, boasted 2,860 starters from 2976 entries.. The modifications to rules made in 1991 were kept, and are still included in the rules for the 2011 PBP. **The most notable change made at that time being that fenders were no longer compulsory and tri-bars were banned for reasons of safety’.**
- In 1991, the PBP Centennial was celebrated by the ACP and the UAF; both events were run simultaneously. This was also when the two clubs decided to "bury the hatchet" and relations have been harmonious ever since. As a concession to the ever-growing congestion in the Paris region, the start location was moved to **St. Quentin-en-Yvelines**, a Parisian suburb near Versailles. A prologue leg from the Paris *Hotel de Ville* to the *gymnase* followed a speech by Jacques Chirac.
- In 2003, a well trained team replaced Robert Lepertel at the head of the organization. He first headed the organization in 1971. For the first time, more riders came from outside France; 2064 starters vs. 2005 for France. A group of 6 riders were awarded the time of 44h40, after time penalties, from a group of 18 who had arrived at Brest in 19h55. **Alpo Kuusisto of Finland rode successfully on a kick scooter.**
- In 2003, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time the fastest finishers were not recognized as the racing aspect was essentially removed from the event, with finishing riders listed alphabetically.
- 2007 saw one of the rainiest editions, with 5160 starters, including 591 Americans. Two randonneurs completed their 10<sup>th</sup> PBP, raising the total to 5 who have done 10
- **22,445** riders have finished PBP since 1931! **1366** Americans have finished PBP, by my count.
- In August 2011, about 6 000 randonneurs will gather in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines to enter into the legend of the PARIS-BREST-PARIS (P.B.P.) Randonneur.

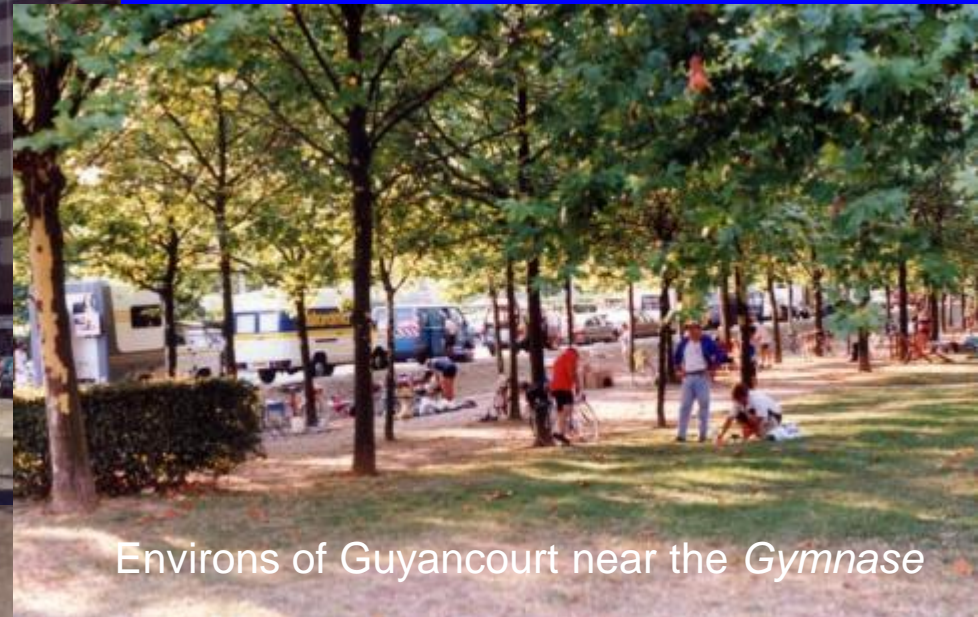


## In Guyancourt (location of start and finish)

- Guyancourt is one of 7 townships that comprise Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines
- The city center is about 1 mile from the gymnasium and there are hotels, the train station, stores, office buildings and a maze of residential area that surrounds the city center – it is not a quaint French village
- Guyancourt is a post modern town and is quite unlike what is seen along the route
- The primary shopping area is located below ground level near the Campanile hotel. There is a large grocery store (Géant hypermarket) and many different types of stores, including a bike shop. There is also a 2<sup>nd</sup> shop at ground level near the shopping center
- The Géant has a wide range of items besides food, since it's a hypermarket
- If you don't know the French names of foods, it is helpful to use the fruit and vegetable displays in the big stores to learn the names of the foods, which may come in handy when buying food out on the course
- The train station is also close to the hotels and the start
- Many Americans stay at the Campanile and Mercure hotels – go there if you desire to be around Americans
- Guyancourt is about 25 km from Paris and about 5 km from Versailles (on the same road as the start, through the town of Saint-Cyr-l'École)



Guyancourt street scene



Environs of Guyancourt near the *Gymnase*



Bike storage room in the Campanile hotel



Campanile hotel, where many Americans stay

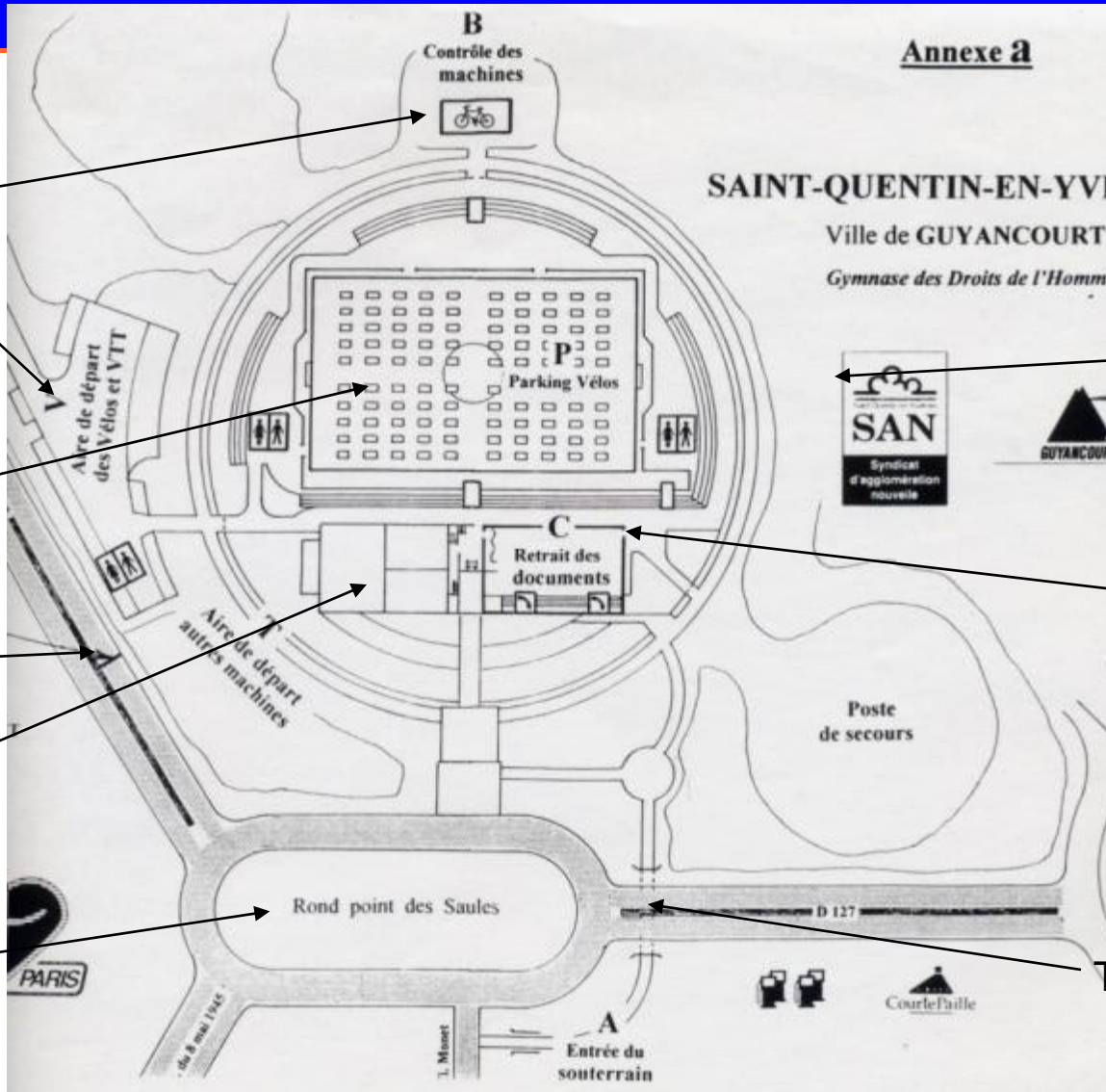


Front of the *Gymnase*



Traffic circle in front of the *Gymnase*

# Gymnase des droits de l'homme – start / finish



Bike check in

Pre-start area

Bike parking

Start line

Gym

Traffic circle

Annexe a

SAINT-QUENTIN-EN-YVE

Ville de GUYANCOURT

Gymnase des Droits de l'Homme



Bike fair area in the days before the start

At the finish go around the side of the gym to turn in your control book

Tunnel under street



# Before the start - Saturday / Sunday

- **Saturday check in for those starting on Sunday**

Process only takes about 15-20 minutes. Open from 8 am to 7 pm, but try to go at your chosen time

Walk around behind the gym on the grass. *Get there through the tunnel under the street*

Park your bike in the bike racks behind the gym and go inside

Pick up brevet card, water bottle and jersey (if ordered) at the table for Americans, where English is spoken

At the bike check: show spare bulbs (*lampoules*) if using non-LED lights, batteries (*piles*) and have an approval mark put on your reflective vest (2007, however, the bike check was canceled because of the rain)

- **Sunday check in for those starting on Monday**

Open from 8 am to 11:30 am, but go at your chosen time, although it doesn't seem to really be a problem if you don't

People mill around all day building up nervous energy that will all be released right at the start and for the first 50 km of the ride— white knuckle time

- **Start**

Different starting times available, but you are locked into the one you specified on your registration, once chosen you can't change

Color of frame number is different for the different start times – easy way to tell which group riders are in farther down the road as everyone from the different starting times gets mixed together after 400 miles

My theory: Just getting to the start line of PBP is about half the effort of finishing and making it through the 1<sup>st</sup> 50 miles without crashing is worth another 10% - so you're 60% done after just 50 miles!!



# Inside the gym – registration, finish, photo pickup, meeting place



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# Bike parking behind the gym



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# Bike check



French riders checking out Tom Milton's bamboo Calfee

- Sunday night start – 80 hour and 90 hour
  - 80 hour group starts out like a 50 mile road race
  - 90 hour group is huge
- Monday morning – 84 hour
- Something new in 2011 - free starting times, where you simply validate your brevet card and start out, but only a max of 20 riders can start at once in a group using this option

## Starting group strategy:

In the past, the 80 hour group returning from Brest met the 90 hour group heading out at the Carhaix control. This is one of the reasons why the new rest stop was added, to alleviate the crowding at the Carhaix control

How fast will you be riding – 80 hours vs. 90 hours?

Consider the riders who will be in each group – speed, number, probable finishing time  
Starting Sunday night – start at 4 pm so that gives over 4 hours of light at the start, but unless one finishes in less than 53 hours it would be 3 nights and 2 days of riding

At the latitude of Paris, the days are relatively long compared to most of the US

I have come to like the 84 hour group. It starts at 5 am – 3 days + 2 or 3 nights

- Allows maximizing your sleep time before the start
- Much smaller group than the 90 hour start
- The check points *can* be much less crowded
- It is possible to ride almost the entire distance in daylight



# Starting times and your strategy

START	TYPE OF CYCLE	TIME LIMIT	CONTROLS
Sunday 04 :00 - 05 :00 pm <b>New earlier time!</b>	Solo and all-terrain cycles	<b>80 hours</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Sunday 05:30 pm <b>New earlier time!</b>	Tandems, triplets, tricycles and all special cycles	<b>90 hours</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Sunday 06:00 - 08:00 pm <b>New earlier time!</b>	Solo and all-terrain cycles	<b>90 hours</b>	<b>To be respected</b>
Sunday 09:00 - 10:00 pm free starts	All	<b>90 hours</b>	<b>To be respected</b>
Monday 04:50 am	Tandems, triplets, tricycles and all special cycles	<b>84 hours</b>	<b>To be respected</b>
Monday 05:00 am	Solo and all-terrain cycles	<b>84 hours</b>	<b>To be respected</b>
Monday 05:30 to 08:00 am free starts	All	<b>Before Thursday 05:00 pm</b>	<b>To be respected</b>



# Choosing your start time

Finishing time statistics listed here are from the organizers:

PBP 2007 time	600k avg time	Std deviation	Number
50 hr and less	27h08	1h41	30
50h to 60h	27h47	2h36	117
60h to 70h	29h28	2h44	469
70h to 80h	32h02	2h53	910
80h to 84h	34h10	1h06	468
84h to 90h	35h45	1h31	1613

Also from the organizers:

“To avoid the crowds, we suggest that you choose the free start on Monday morning, August 22 from 05:30 a.m. You will start when it suits you and encounter a very low number of other riders in the controls for at least 50% of the course, and even for the whole course if you spend the first night without sleep.” *This strategy has always worked quite well for me.*

“For those who plan to finish between 85 and 90 hours, we recommend that you start in the last departures on Sunday evening.” *The vast majority of riders finish in the 85-90 hour range, based on the Pareto charts shown every 4 years on finishing times.*

- Support vehicles must use different routes than the riders, which can be a challenge for drivers
- Support vehicles must be registered and have their support sign in the window
- It can be very difficult for a single support person to keep up with a fast rider without skipping some check points. Front runners sometimes use 2 support teams that leap frog controls
- A support person who is very knowledgeable and experienced at doing support in the US may not be as successful at PBP because of a lack of experience driving in France and a lack of experience with an event like PBP
- Driving support in France can be very challenging, compared to here as the roads are somewhat more complex than many places in the U.S. Route planning for drivers is essential
- Support vehicles take up a lot of space around the controls and the support crews mill around the controls, often times making it difficult for riders to move about
- I found that a support person doesn't necessarily save large amounts of time, even though the food is already bought and ready to eat when I arrive
- Many of the French support crews have little kitchens set up outside the controls on the street for their riders
- Volunteers (*benevolents*) watch support vehicles closely at the checkpoints for any rule breaking. There are about 1500 *benevolents* at PBP!
- Always be appreciative of the many *benevolents* that make PBP possible! They offer incredible help with all the many details of the ride and are working hard at the controls
- Support people in line at the cafeterias at the controls must wait to be served after riders in line have been served





# Tradition and something new



Alpo Kuusisto and his famous kick scooter in 2003

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# Lining up at the pre-start



From the days before mandatory helmets



For the group starts, everyone waits behind the gate on the lane on the side of the gym in a pre-start and then they go out to the street to line up at the actual start line



The Motards of ANEC

There is lots of nervous energy built up by everyone waiting for the start that has to be burned off

I've seen a number of riders crash out in the first 5 km – I've been taken down in a crash 500m after the start and also had the rider directly in front of me crash hard about 2 km from the start

1<sup>st</sup> 20-30 miles led by motorcyclists (The Motards of ANEC) who are very enthusiastic, but have in the past lead the pack the wrong way

Starting in the front allows for riding through the stop lights with the motorcycle escort at the start, but it is also rather risky because of the pack and the motorcycles

Starting in the front rows requires an understanding of how Europeans hold position in groups, which is unlike the way Americans politely queue up

For 20 miles riders slam on their brakes, speed up, then brake and speed up until the nervous energy is burnt off and the pack spreads out

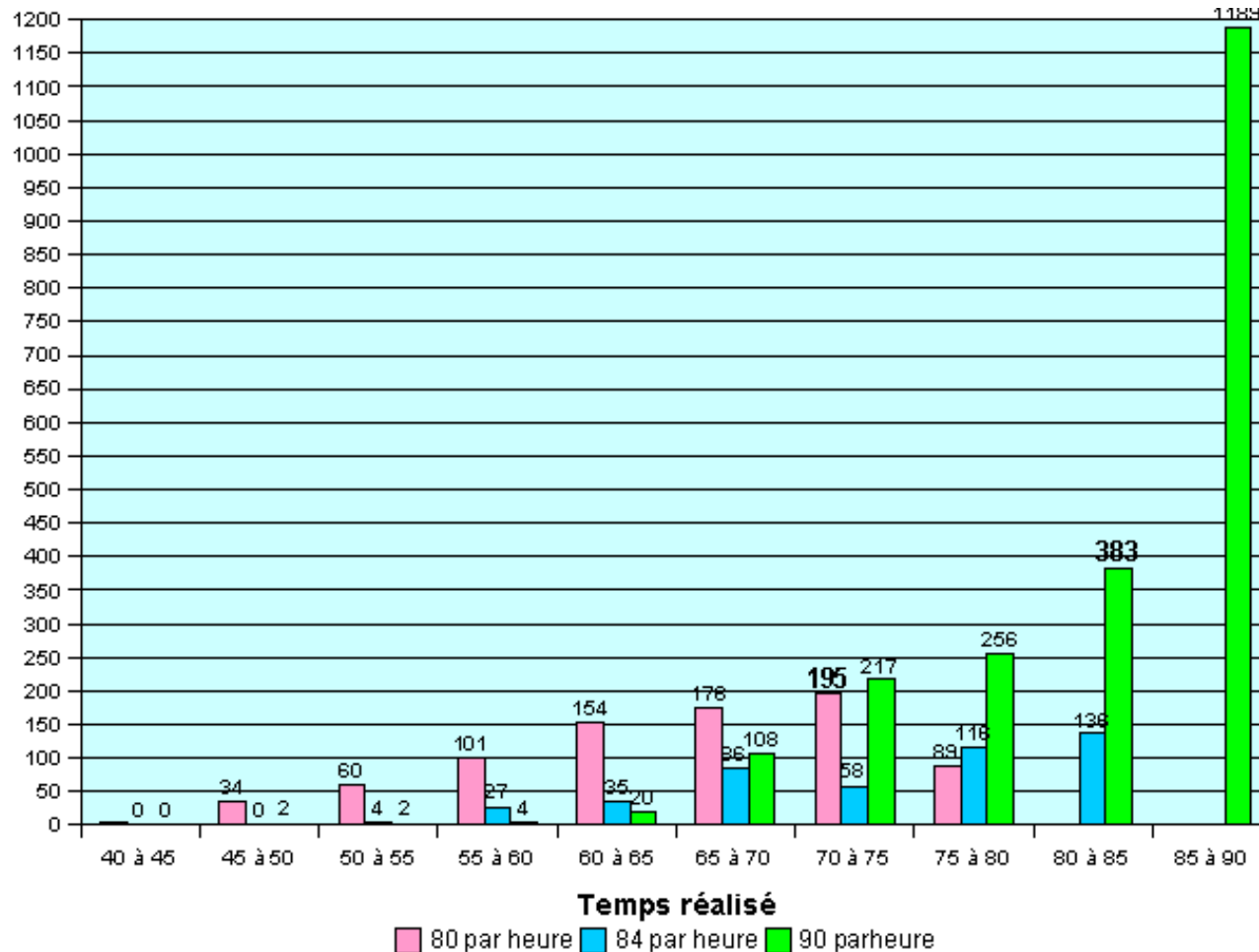
1<sup>st</sup> 50 miles are wooded and hilly, real white knuckle riding in a big pack

After 50 miles it opens up into fields as the route passes north of Chartres. This is more typical of the route for the next 100 miles

Be especially aware of a real hazard in small villages – road furniture (poles, curbs, *ralentisseurs* (speed bumps) etc.) in the road designed to slow car traffic. Hitting one of those while riding in a pack or alone at night could be disastrous

If you make it through the 1<sup>st</sup> 50 miles OK, consider the ride 60% completed

Typical histogram of finishing times from an earlier PBP (2003)



## 9 Control towns

- Saint-Quentin-En-Yvelines – *Gymnase* start and finish
  - Mortagne-au-Perche – a rest stop (*ravitaillement*) on the way out with water and food, not a control. It is a control on the return. This town is on top of a hill.
  - Villaines-la-Juhel – bag drops here in both directions
  - Fougères – ½ way to Brest, Medieval castle on the route, a classic
  - Tinténiac – School of Bel Air hosts the control
  - Loudéac – bag drop here in both directions. usual overcrowding for sleeping here will be alleviated by the addition of Saint Nicolas du Pélem rest stop, steepest hills in this region
  - Carhaix-Plouguer
  - Brest – ride into the city proper for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 24 years. Cross the Albert Louppe Bridge over the Elorn River & Goulet Strait to enter Brest
  - Dreux – the last control before the finishing control. Added back into the route in 2003, after a long absence.
- Also, Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem is not a control town, but a rest stop



# Rest stops / controls

- It seems that most people stop and rest – some even plan on riding very little at night – it is possible
- There are significantly less riders out at night and in the morning one sees waves of riders as the sun comes up
- There is floor space at Carhaix and the other rest stops – maybe it means laying down on the gym floor at a school. Bringing along a Mylar reflective sheet might be helpful for staying warm while sleeping.
- Most controls are at schools or town community centers because they have the facilities for making and serving food. *There are no convenience stores along the route.*
- Remember that PBP is a major money maker for these villages with 6000 riders coming through and spending money for food
- The food is not cheap and it is best compared to what one would find in the Midwest U.S. – not fancy, but good ‘rando’ food
- Last time the food I chose often times alternated between chicken and rice and meat and potatoes, or pasta
- I like to eat the food and fill my tray at the controls - it’s part of the experience and a hot meal is nice
- They always have soup (*potage*) and bread (*pain*) at the controls
- Expect to also see a wide range of drinks, including wine
- It is possible to get a really upset stomach with some of the intense mineral waters available
- Even though there are so many riders, they are spread out over great distances, so the controls really aren’t that crowded, considering that there are 6000 riders
- The longest wait in a food line is usually 10-15 minutes, but many riders wait longer at the crowded controls
- There rarely is a wait to have your book stamped
- Expect to pay over \$120 for food if you eat at each control
- There are also vendors at some of the check points with bike equipment for sale, if you need it
- There are also mechanics at some of the controls – they could be a real ride saver
- Bag drops are available from Des Peres Travel – a bag at Villaines la Juhel and one at Carhaix, so that makes 4 total times at your drop bags. Use a waterproof bag inside your bag, so everything stays dry in the bag
- Some of the control facilities are at rather large schools – expect to walk or ride 300 yards as you visit the check-in, cafeteria, bathroom, bag drop
- Please note that walking around at some of the controls is very hard on your cleats because some of them have gravel in places, and not just asphalt



# Rest stops / control points



Typical fare found at the controls



Food line and eating area



Road side food stops are becoming more common as people realize there's money to be made from 6000 riders going by



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## Tinténiac

A little smaller facility than the other control points with no kitchen, but also no gravel



There are always volunteers at the street directing riders into the controls  
*The whole ride feels like being on a journey, rather than a bike ride*



# Villaines-la-Juhel control



- The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> controls are at Villaines-la-Juhel
- The control is in the *Hotel de Ville* up the steps
- Kitchen set up across the street
- Bag drop – must find it, but it is usually right down the street
- The city in some years gives you a key chain and a CD about their town at sign in (nice souvenirs, but not nice to carry for 600 miles)

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# Your control book

<p>ST-QUENTIN-EN-YVELINES le 24/08 - 04 h.45 Tandems - Triplettes Tricycles - Vélos "spéciaux"</p> <p><b>LETTRE</b></p> <p>le 24/08 - à 05 h.00 Vélos "solo" - V.T.T.</p>	<p>LOUDÉAC du 24/08 - 18 h.25 au 25/08 - 01 h.35</p> <p><b>A.C. LOUDEAC</b></p> <p>1.04 444 km</p>	<p>CARHAIX du 25/08 - 03 h.10 au 26/08 - 01 h.00</p> <p><b>CARHAIX-PLOUGUER</b></p> <p>16419 684 km</p>	<p>FOUGÈRES du 25/08 - 11 h.35 au 26/08 - 18 h.25</p> <p><b>FOUGÈRES-TIA-VILLE</b></p> <p>427</p> <p>899 km</p>
<p>VILLAINES-LA-JUHEL du 24/08 - 11 h.25 au 24/08 - 18 h.40</p> <p><b>Cyclo-Tourisme</b></p> <p>53700 VILLAINES-LA-JUHEL 13-10 219 km</p>	<p>CARHAIX du 24/08 - 21 h.10 au 25/08 - 13 h.20</p> <p><b>CARHAIX-PLOUGUER</b></p> <p>6426 520 km</p>	<p>LOUDÉAC du 25/08 - 06 h.10 au 26/08 - 07 h.10</p> <p><b>A.C. LOUDEAC</b></p> <p>20423 60 km</p>	<p>VILLAINES-LA-JUHEL du 25/08 - 15 h.00 au 27/08 - 01 h.20</p> <p><b>Cyclo-Tourisme</b></p> <p>13423 100 ANS</p> <p>1063 km</p>
<p>FOUGÈRES du 24/08 - 14 h.05 au 25/08 - 00 h.00</p> <p><b>FOUGÈRES-TIA-VILLE</b></p> <p>24-B 1999 17408 305 km</p>	<p>BREST du 25/08 - 00 h.00 au 25/08 - 18 h.30</p> <p><b>ville de BREST</b></p> <p>11411 603 km</p>	<p>TINTÉNIAC du 25/08 - 09 h.30 au 26/08 - 14 h.00</p> <p><b>LES RANDONNEURS DU PERCH</b></p> <p>5, quai de la Donac 35190 TINTÉNIAC</p> <p>00:58 845 km</p>	<p>MORTAGNE-AU-PERCHE du 25/08 - 18 h.30 au 27/08 - 07 h.00</p> <p><b>LES RANDONNEURS DU PERCH</b></p> <p>MORTAGNE-AU-PERCHE NOGENT-LE-ROI</p> <p>du 25/08 - 22 h.30 au 27/08 - 13 h.00</p> <p>NOGENT-LE-ROI</p>
<p>TINTÉNIAC du 24/08 - 15 h.45 au 25/08 - 03 h.20</p> <p><b>LES RANDONNEURS DU PERCH</b></p> <p>5, quai de la Donac 35190 TINTÉNIAC</p> <p>20413 359 km</p>	<p><b>CORLAY</b></p> <p>SECRET H 7 20</p> <p>SECRET</p>	<p><b>SECRET</b></p> <p>SECRET</p>	<p>ST-QUENTIN-EN-YVELINES du 26/08 - 00 h.00 au 27/08 - 17 h.00</p> <p><b>CLUB PARISIEN</b></p> <p>1714 28 2036 1204 km</p>

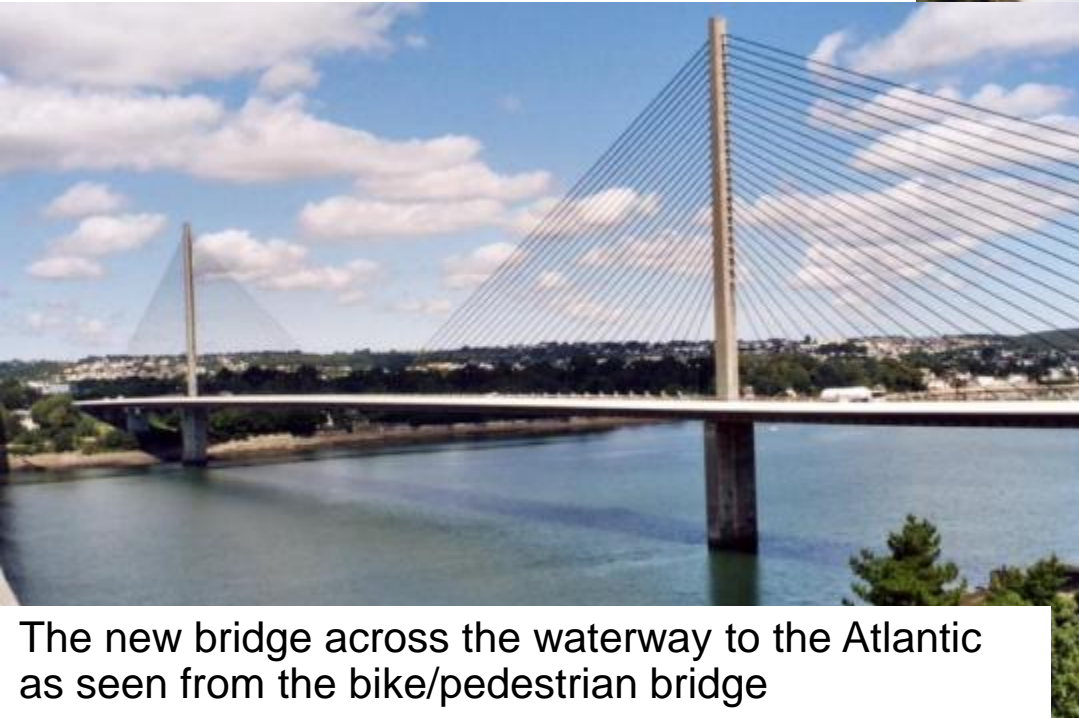
Use of the control book continues in 2011, in addition to the chips that enable following your progress on the web

Notice the secret controls

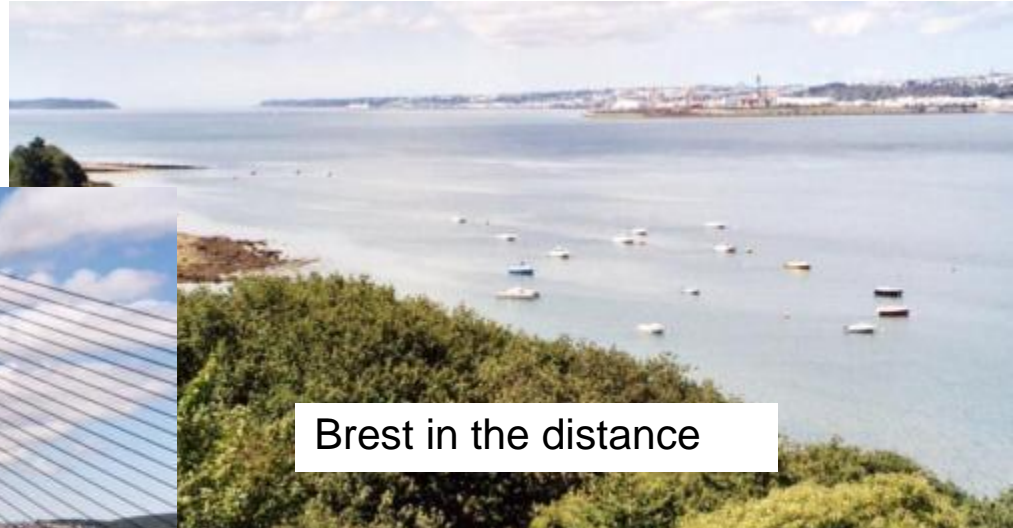
The first order of business at the control is to get the book stamped

- The last 75-100 miles to Brest are relatively hilly
- The “big climb”, the *Roc Trevezel*, is a very gradual climb of about 2 miles up a very big hill
- I’ve noticed that many riders when they get really tired run their gears ‘rail to rail’ on the climbs – smallest gear on the short climb, followed by biggest gear on the short descent – there are no big mountain climbs in PBP, but 100s of hills
- You know you’ve all but made it to Brest when you reach the Albert Louppe Bridge over the Elorn River & Goulet Strait. It is closed to car traffic, which the adjacent new bridge carries. Once on the other side, the route now goes fully into the city and port of Brest, not seen since 1987.
- The control in Brest will be in a facility run by the French Navy – it should be a lot more spacious than the previous Brest control
- Many riders stop to take a picture of the Brest city sign:





The new bridge across the waterway to the Atlantic as seen from the bike/pedestrian bridge



Brest in the distance



# Breton Language still in use in Brittany

- Brittany has had links with Wales and southwest England since the Dark Ages, when people immigrated from there.
- Their influence on the language and culture continues today
- Bretons played a major role in William of Norman's conquest of England in 1066 and controlled 10% of England at one time
- Brittany is home to the Breton language, which is separate from French and it was the common language through the Middle Ages, although it is rapidly dying out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Breton place names traditionally start with prefixes such as Plou, Lan, Tre and Ker
- You'll notice the town names on the signs are in French and Breton
- Read the Breton name and it is a great phonetic aid in pronouncing the name of the town in French. For example Quimper is Kemper in Breton.
- Knowing the reason for the two names on village signs is another way to feel part of the culture while riding along in Brittany



- Drivers are typically respectful of riders – this is not only because cycling is a major element of the culture, but because there are very strict laws protecting cyclists in France
- Total altitude gain measured last time on my altimeter was 10,800 m (35,400 ft)
- Plenty of places along the route to find food as cafes and restaurants are in every village
- Be aware though, that most little villages will not have food available at night
- There is a village about every 7 miles and it always has a church with a steeple in the center, is usually at a high point in the countryside
- There is always something to see – never a dull section, and you never know what new sight is around a corner – maybe a medieval castle, as in Fougères
- There is only one major highway crossing and they have volunteers out there at the highway watching out for the riders
- The roads are uniformly excellent
- People come out to the end of their road and watch the riders go by. Even at midnight they will be out there in the darkness, with no lights, watching and clapping
- Many people set up water and food tables along the route – it is good form to stop
- Children set up water tables and love to fill your bottles – sometimes they ask for your autograph! I like to carry a roll of American quarters to hand out to the children as souvenirs
- At night, most small villages are completely dark with all of the shutters closed and no security lights – they seem like ghost towns – very spooky
- However, some small villages are out in force at night to cheer the riders as they pass through
- You'll notice that as you are riding along and passing rural houses they have signs in front of them with a name. This is the given name of their house – which they use as their mailing address, instead of a street or highway address



# Route following

- PBP is completely different than American brevets in terms of route following
- Route sheets aren't really even needed – few riders seem to use them
- Simply follow the arrows – there are arrow signs wherever you have the opportunity to make a decision on which way to go
- Due to road conditions, the organizers have in the past made little changes to the route, which can cause real problems if you don't pick up on it and try to follow your route sheet instead of the arrows, so follow the arrows
- There must be about 1000 arrows on the route with different colors used for the outbound and returning directions
- Maybe in 2011 the slightly reflective arrow signs will again be used
- In '91 the signs used a dark, non-reflective arrow on a dark blue background – I had to stop many times and shine a light around at intersections to find the arrow
- **One has to always be paranoid about finding the arrows to stay on course**
- Simply following French riders is no guarantee of being on course – most of them don't live in Brittany
- In many cases, volunteers driving around have stopped and given riders who are off course directions back to the course
- If you don't see an arrow for a long time, you should probably assume you're off course. You can either start back tracking, or wait and see if any other riders come along – there is always going to be someone riding a few minutes behind you
- Of course, GPS may negate the necessity of following the arrows for some riders. However, a GPS route needs to be used with caution as noted by the organizers : “The route is subject to change based on the road works and the decisions of the French administration.”



**Always be on the lookout for these arrows**

Itinéraire ALLER

(Cartes "MICHELIN" n°:60-59-58 ou "IGN" n°:13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20)

Dép.	N° route	Localités	km partiel	km total	Dép.	N° route	Localités	Km partiel	km total
		<b>SAINT OUENTIN EN YVELINES</b>				D 18	ROMAGNE	6,5	311,5
		<b>GUYANCOURT</b>				D 20	ST SAUVEUR DES LANDES	3,0	314,5
	D 12	Gymnase des Droits de l'Homme		0	I	D 20	ST HILAIRE DES LANDES	3,5	318,0
		Rond point des Saules			L		VIEUX VY SUR COUESNON	10,5	328,5
		Rond point des Sangliers			L		SENS DE BRETAGNE	4,5	333,0
		Avenue des Garannes			E		La Bisotais		
Y		<b>VOISINS LE BRETONNEUX</b>					FEINS	8,5	341,5
V		Route de Guivancourt	2,0	2,0	E		DINGE	7,0	348,5
E	D 36	Cfour route de Guivancourt / D 36			T		La Basse-Forêt	5,5	354,0
L		Route de Trappes							
I		<b>MONTIGNY LE BRETONNEUX</b>			V	D 20	<b>TINTENIAC</b>		
N		Avenue de Kierpe			I		<i>Contrôle</i>	5,0	359,0
E		<b>TRAPPES</b>			L				
S	RD 35	Carrefour D 36 / RD 35	3,5	5,5	A		LA BAUSSAINE	5,0	364,0
		Avenue des Frères Lumière			I		BECHEREL	4,0	368,0
		Avenue Enrico Fermi			N	D 220	Carrefour D 20 / D 220	1,5	369,5
		Avenue Georges Politzer	2,5	8,0	E		MEDREAC	8,5	378,0
		<b>ELANCOURT</b>					QUEDILLAC	6,5	384,5
		Avenue Georges Politzer				D 166	La Prévostais	3,5	388,0
	D 58	Carrefour D 58			RD		Carrefour D 166 / RD	3,5	391,5
		Route du Mesnil					Le Parson		
		Pont de la Villedieu	1,0	9,0		D 220	SAINT MEEN LE GRAND	1,5	393,0
		Route du Mesnil			***	D 66			
		Rond point des Réaux			2		LOSCOUET SUR MEU	4,0	397,0
		Avenue de la Villedieu			2		ILLIFAUT	9,0	406,0
	D 23	Rond point de la Boissière	1,5	10,5	***	D 305			
Y		Boulevard André Malraux			5	D 793	MENEAC	9,0	415,0
V		Route de Trappes			6	D 66	LA TRINITE PORHOET	8,5	423,5
E		Place de l'Hermanderie			***				
L		Route de Monfort				D 14	PLUMIEUX	3,0	426,5
I		<b>ER GAL</b>	4,0	14,5		D 778	LA CHEZE	7,0	433,5
N	D 15	<b>JOUARS</b>							
E	D 13	LES MOUSSEAUX	4,0	18,5		D 41	<b>LOUDEAC</b>		
S		LE TREMBLAY SUR MAULDRE	1,0	19,5			<i>Contrôle</i>	10,5	444,0
		Cheval Mort	3,0	22,5					
	D 138	MERE	2,5	25,0			TREVE	5,5	449,5
	D 112	Carrefour D 138 / D 112	3,0	28,0	C		GRACE-UZEL	4,0	453,5
		GAMBAISEUIL	5,0	33,0	O	D 7	Carrefour D 41 / D 7	4,0	457,5
	D 983	GAMBAIS	5,0	38,0	T	RD	Carrefour D 7 / RD		
		CONDE SUR VESGRE	4,0	42,0	E	D 35	Carrefour RD / D 35	1,0	458,5
***		FAVEROLLES	8,0	50,0	S	D 53	Les Aumécades	1,0	459,5
	D 26	NOGENT LE ROI	7,0	57,0			MERLEAC	4,0	463,5
E		ORMOY	5,5	62,5	D		LA PORTE AUX MOINES	4,0	467,5
		TREMBLAY LE VICOMTE	7,0	69,5	*		ST MARTIN DES PRES	2,0	469,5
et	D 140	CHATEAUNEUF EN THYMERAIS	12,0	81,5	A	D 44	Carrefour D 53 / D 44	3,0	472,5
		ST MAIXME-Hauterive	5,0	86,5	R	D 767	Le Poteau	3,5	476,0
L		JAUDRAIS	4,0	90,5	M	D 790	CORLAY	1,5	477,5
	D 20	SENONCHES	7,5	98,0	O		PLOUVENEZ QUINTIN	15,0	492,5
***	D 8	NEUILLY SUR EURE	11,0	109,0	R	D 49	Carrefour D 790 / D 49	1,5	494,0
	D 918	La Barbinière	10,0	119,0			Lustruven		
	D 8	LONGNY AU PERCHE	3,0	122,0			SAINT LUBIN	5,5	499,5
O							Kerdouch		
R	D 931	<b>MORTAGNE AU PERCHE</b>				D 23	Carrefour D 49 / D 23	4,0	503,5
N		<i>Contrôle ravitaillement</i>	19,0	141,0			MAHEL-CARHAIX	4,5	508,0
E									

- Think of the route sheet as a backup, not something to follow along, as on an American brevet
- The route may have small, last minute changes that won't be reflected in the route sheet





The French government has a Department of Flowers, which awards villages the *Village Fleuri* honor for their flower displays



# Along the Route in the cities



Medieval castle in Fougères, back on the route for the 1<sup>st</sup> time since 1987!



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# Along the route



Sizun



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Brest



Paris

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## Equipment

- What I've learned is to not use older, seemingly reliable equipment, as it tends to break right during PBP
- I've broken a pedal spindle, a handlebar bag support, bottom bracket, generator and fender over the years at PBP
- Improvising can be a tremendous asset when something that might otherwise stop you can be transformed into only a minor inconvenience and a great story to recount later
- I often see people who have broken bike parts when they unpack their bike and off they go to find a bike shop
- Bike shops aren't necessarily like shops here, with a full range of parts. There are 2 shops near the start in Guyancourt. There are also shops in Paris. Decathlon stores also have some bikes and parts
- There are mechanics at the controls and also bike part vendors.
- It used to be that if you weren't riding on a French threaded bike, you were out of luck finding English threaded parts, but not so anymore. The mechanics at the controls now have English threaded parts, however they don't have every possible part, so having a great running bike is very important
- Are fenders an option? I don't think so, and maybe others feel the same after the rain of 2007.
- Expect to see all sorts of improperly attached lights and equipment come flying off of bikes in the 1<sup>st</sup> 10 km, which is scary when riding in a fast moving pack
- One of the great benefits of PBP is the wide range of bikes that riders from all over the world ride— great fun to see them all in the bike parking area at the gym

- Forewarned is forearmed – rain like in '87 and '07 can easily happen again
- Most riders now do not use fenders – I can't imagine riding in the rain for 12 hours straight with no fenders. Fenders made the rain very tolerable for me in 2007.
- In '87 it rained for almost a day straight – at the 1<sup>st</sup> check point I had items floating around in my handlebar bag. In '07 many riders quit because of the rain
- In '91 there was a solid tailwind to Brest, which was a solid headwind back
- In 2003 I brought along tights for the 1<sup>st</sup> time – I couldn't have ridden at night without them and it wasn't raining – it was quite chilly
- In 2007 I wore tights the entire ride day and night in the rain
- I've spent enough nights shivering at controls to know to bring warmer clothes
- Northern France is at the same latitude as Maine, so August doesn't necessarily mean hot temperatures
- However, it has also been uncomfortably warm at PBP

Riding in mid-afternoon in the 2007 edition



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A change for 2011 brings the route back to two of the best sites that haven't been seen since 1987:

- The medieval castle at Fougères
- Actually riding into the center of Brest along the port, instead of only the very far eastern edge of Brest

Also, the addition of a rest stop town to alleviate the crowding at Carhaix and Loudéac:

This is the village of Saint-Nicolas-du-Pélem, between Loudéac and Carhaix. This is not a control, but a rest stop option. There will be sleeping mats, showers, breakfast and a mechanic, according to the organizers.

- Language is too big of a topic to cover, other than to say that many Americans don't seem to make the effort to learn a little French
- If you only know *bonjour* and *merci*, they go a long way at the controls and in France in general
- Learning a few basic words is most helpful and greatly adds to the level of understanding of your surroundings and lowers your frustration level at times – it is time well spent in making the ride easier for yourself
- Learning a few rules of pronunciation will help immensely, even if you don't learn basic words– especially in saying place names
- Away from Paris rural people are less likely to speak English, but on the ride one can figure out most things without using French
- French cyclists are perhaps the worst enunciators in the French population – mumbling is the norm, especially after having ridden 1000 km
- At PBP English sadly has become very common on the ride and the results book that you receive some months after the ride is now in English – although it makes it easier to do the ride, it does take away from the challenge, character and flavor of the event



# A few cultural considerations

- There are plenty of books on this subject, but some lessons I have learned:
- There aren't many different ways to say simple niceties in French – *bonjour* and *merci* work 99 % of the time, whereas in English there are 26 ways to say hello
- Always say *bonjour* when entering a *patisserie*, if only to hear a beautiful *bonjour* in reply – greetings are always appreciated and reciprocated
- These next 3 rules apply to French culture in general, but not necessarily to PBP. These are an essential part of what makes France so interesting and should always be remembered when trying to understand why things are as they are.
- Rule # 1 in France – nothing is done for your convenience
- Rule # 2 – when you ask for something the immediate response is no, which doesn't mean no, it means ask me again with more details
- Rule # 3 - employees working at a large store are not there to serve you, but generally to have a job and stay busy
- The American concept of standing in line and waiting your turn is not part of the culture
- Do as the French do when in France. Just riding a bike is a big help to do this anywhere in France. It's especially fun when someone native to France stops you and asks *you* for directions when your riding.





# Bike terminology in French

Knowing the names of the parts on the bike can be very beneficial when asking for help at a bike shop or from a mechanic at the controls on the ride

You probably won't find a lot of these in a standard French-English dictionary

Bicycle – vélo

Frame – cadre

Fork – fourche

Headset – jeu de direction

Tires – pneus (wired-on) or boyaux (sew-up)

Tubes – chambres à air

Rims – jantes

Spokes – rayons

Hubs - moyeux

Stem – potence

Handlebars – cintre or guidon

Saddle – selle

Seatpost – tige de selle

Brakes – freins

Pedals- pédales

Crankset – pédalier

Bottom bracket – boîtier de pédalier

Water bottle – bidon

Water bottle cage – porte bidon

Wheel – roue

Rack – porte-bagages

Handlebar bag – sacoche de guidon

Seat bag – sacoche de selle

Fenders – garde-boue

Lights -lumières

Headlight – phare

Taillight – feu arrière

Bolt – boulon

Nut – écrou

Oil – l'huile

# Finish in Guyancourt



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# Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines



Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is located:  
25 km far from Paris using A12 and A13.  
30 min. from Orly international airport using A86.

## Travel to Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

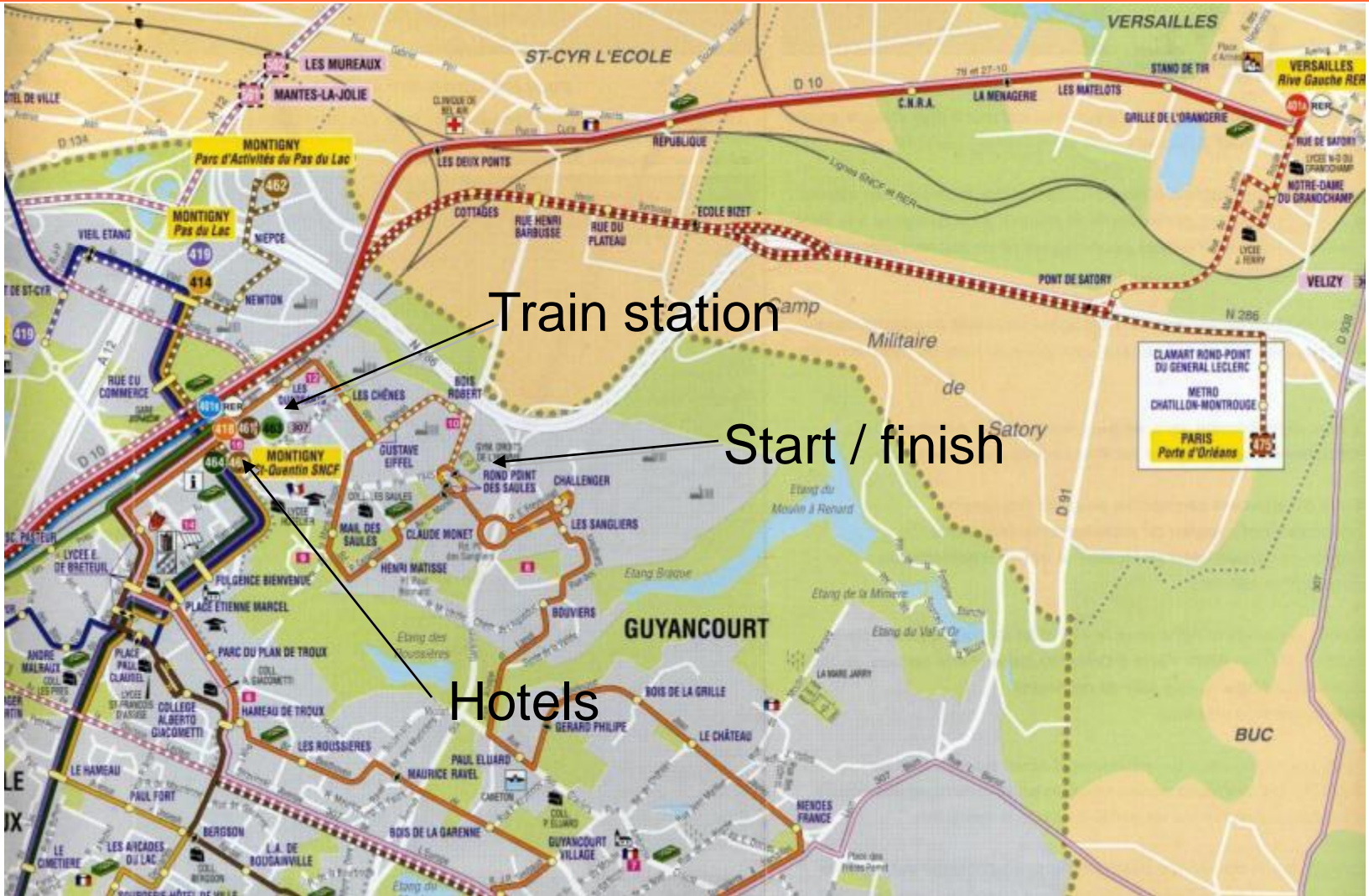
- Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is an agglomeration made up of seven communes : Elancourt, Guyancourt, Magny-les-Hameaux, Montigny-le-Bretonneux, Trappes, la Verrière et Voisins-le-Bretonneux.

### By car

Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is located :

- 26 min. from the business center "La Défense" by SNCF direct train, with a connection towards the RER A train
- 25 min. from the Paris-Montparnasse station by SNCF train with a connection to the Atlantic TGV
- 35 min. from Paris center through les Invalides, 40 min. from Saint-Michel/Notre-Dame station and 45 min. far from Austerlitz station with the RER C train.
- The communes of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines and its surroundings are served by 20 lines of bus. 23 interurban lines of bus connect the agglomeration to the cities of Haut-de-Seine, of Essonne, of the valley of Chevreuse and the Parisian outskirts, to Paris.

# Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines



# A French description of PBP

A very apropos description from the organizers in 2003:

“By entering this mythical ride, you will test your cycling agility and your human endurance.

You will strive to obtain your Personal Best or you will try simply to rally the arrival... but you will always do your best to live this adventure while supporting each other and building friendships with those who participate in this endurance monument, which is much more than a simple hike. No place of honor, nor any podium, only the pleasure of the challenge alone will help you to overcome the suffering... and the magic moment of the arrival will obliterate the doubtful moments on the roads of Brittany or of Normandy.

You will not be alone: you will be in the company of entrants from all over the world. You will appreciate the charms of France and you will be united by the same goal: to rally BREST and return to PARIS.

You will not be alone : many spectators - or rather admirers – will encourage you throughout your journey, indeed will support you in attaining the fixed goal. You will appreciate also the hundreds of volunteers who will help throughout the journey.”



<http://www.paris-brest-paris.org/pbp2011/index-en.php>

<http://www.rusa.org/pbp.html>

<http://www.audax-club-parisien.com/EN/>

<http://www.parisbrestparis.tv/>

(Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines site with local accommodation offers)

[http://www.paris-brest-paris.org/pbp2011/index2.php?lang=en&cat=presentation&page=information\\_general](http://www.paris-brest-paris.org/pbp2011/index2.php?lang=en&cat=presentation&page=information_general)

(Information booklet)



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Paris

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# Bonne route et bonne courage

Slides are only so good at conveying information. Talking through them would obviously allow more information to be discussed and presented.

I hope these slides present information that answers many questions and also raises many questions that leads you to think through your mental preparation for PBP so that you are successful in finishing the greatest of all rides

As the volunteers say to the riders as they leave the controls and head back out on the road “*bonne route et bonne courage*”



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