

# 輪 な 道

WANACHI  
【わなち】  
道を車輪が通った跡、  
という意味。  
広辞苑によれば  
轍(わだち)の転訛とも。

見て、走って、感じた読者レポート

## REPORT

日時：2012年7月29日～8月3日  
走行場所：フランス ローヌ＝  
アルプ地域圏  
走行距離：441km  
自転車：コルナゴE1

アルプスの民と風物に触れた  
僕らのツール  
ド・フランス  
ツールの季節はテレビに釘付けになる山口泰さん。  
来日したフランス人旅行者と意気投合、  
アコガレの山岳ステージの峠を巡る旅に出かけた。

山口 泰 54歳 自転車歴10年

鎌倉への転居を機に、  
ダイエットのため、友人の  
佐藤氏の勧めで自転車とランニングを  
始め、サイクリストの仲間入り。その後、  
雑誌でツールのことを知り、7月はツールを  
毎晩テレビ観戦の日々。



## Our Tour de France, touching people and scenery in Alps



Just below the Iseren, we were captured by breathtaking view and stopped on the way.

"I'd like to climb the Galibier pass some day", The dream of Michinao Sato, which he told to the French people traveling in Japan whom he encountered in Kamakura, came true. The French people are Vincent and Christine. They are the same age pro-Japanese, live in the suburb of Chambéry in Savoie where the tour de France runs through in the mountain stages every year. They are Judo-ka, Vincent is 3 dan and runs Judo club, Christine is shodan. They met in Judo club at the University and were happily married couple. Their another interest is cycling. They ran from Savoie to the Atlantic ocean on the tandem bike along the Loire river.

Their tandem also conquered many passes in the Alps. Once after they went home, they sent Michinao a great invitation. They invited us to the cycling tour in French Alps for a vacation trip with them. In addition to Col du Galibier, col de l'Iseran, L'Alpe d'Huez, col de la Croix de Fer, Col de La Madeleine are all included as the critical points of most important passes. We call this circular course "our Tour du France". Racers are three of us, Vincent, his sons Lemi and Theophil and his Judo friend Gill who used to be a member of French National Judo team. Christine and Gill's wife Cathy, their sons were supporting us in the cars.

## Etape1: People pride themselves of their local cheese

District of Savoie is named after Duke Savoie, one of the noblest families of the southern Europe. The family had owned not only French Alps area but also southern Switzerland around Geneva and Piemonte region in Italy around Torino. The last king of Italy also had come from this family. We could see pasture everywhere in this Savoie land even near the mountain top. That's why everybody in this area recommend the visitor to taste a local cheese because it is so delicious.

The most tasty cheese of this area which everybody agree is ete de Beaufort. It is made from the milk of the cows which eat nutritious grass in Summer. That's why taste of it is so rich and flavored. Departing from Albertville, we dropped in at the town

of Beaufort as the first stop for lunch.

The team supporter had visited Marche(market) of this town and had bought baguettes, ham, fruit and ete de Beaufort already. The hard skin of mold being peeled off with the Opinel knife, we tasted the soft part of this cheese. Salty cheese and baguette are so good after a certain distance of warm up ride.

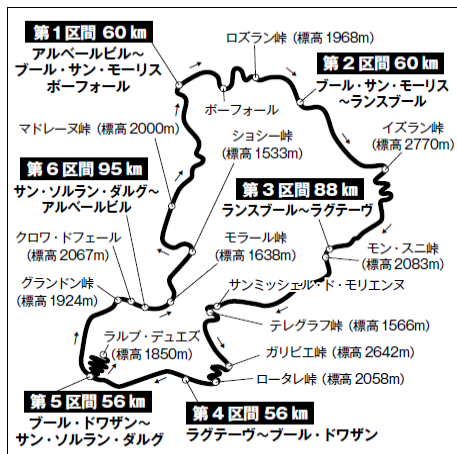
"Have more cheese. Otherwise you might suffer from hunger knock in the difficult hill this afternoon." Hearing this advice, we could not stop eating. After lunch, we gained 968m on the 8% slope. We were able to see the great view of Mont Blank with some clouds thanks to the effort of the climbing. Having passed Le Cornet de Roselend, we arrived at the hotel in Bourg St Maurice.

## Etape2 : Origin of the word “Alps” and traditional stone house

Having finished the warming up day, we started to the highest point of our tour de France, Col de l'Iseran on the second day. First, we gained about 1000m to the Val D'Iseren, one of the most famous ski resort used at the Albertville Olympic. Breathtaking view of the dam lake surrounded by mountains cheered us up during picnic lunch time. In Alps range, lots of cows and sheep were relaxing and eating on the grass land even over 2000m alt.. Panoramic views let us forget difficulty of gradient of the slope though, 7 to 8 % of the hill steadily harmed our leg muscles. Over the limit of the forest, no tree was seen. At the top of the Iseran pass behind the road sign, stone made chapel was dignifiedly standing and facing to the snow covered mountains. The word 'Alps' is thought to come from summer pasture, plural form of alp which means female in old English or rocky mountain in Celtic.

Descending from the mountain, we arrived at the dead-end village of the other side of the valley. Many stone houses, some of which were going to decay, were protected as heritage of the mountain culture. What surprised me most was that not only the walls and columns but roofs were made of stones. It was suspected that the only available material to build houses would have been stone. Stone churches, stone houses and stone paved roads. We saw a shabby moss covered house which could have been given up at the end of the village. Entering the building, I felt like being oppressed by the history of the mountain people living against snow and stone.

We stopped at Lanslebourg to stay. It used to have been a main hub village to be connected to Italy through Mt Cenis pass before the tunnel between France and Italy was made. Now it regained peacefulness as a local ski resort.

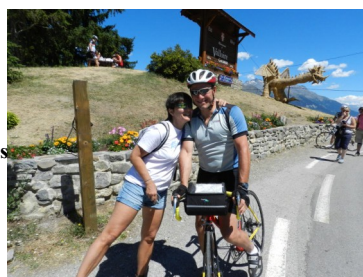


● A chapel at Iseran pass stands being fascinated with the mountain



● Galibier pass is an exciting vista point seeing Mont Blanc and Italian border.

● a couple of lovebirds. Vincent is the ace, Christine is the director of our team



## Etape 3: "Momotaro" legend in France!

Today must have been the day on which our dreams came true.

At first, we were going down to St Michel de Maurienne, then we were heading up to col du Télégraphe, once were descending to Valloire, a ski resort, finally were climbing up to col du Galibier (HC). The very first part was good for warming up. But Telegraph building, which used to be a fort, was up on the top of the hill wall far high. Fortunately, climbing road was covered under the shade of trees in the forest. The average gradient of this road was 7% to the pass.

At the top of the pass, we enjoyed picnic lunch under the beautiful sky behind the road sign. Today's menu is unfamiliar local tomme, baguette and couscous. The bulletin board of the pass showed historical pictures and stories about the battle of the Tour at this part.

Surprisingly, in 218 B.C., it was written that Hannibal, Carthaginian general, had passed the Galibier pass to enter Roma with elephants. Vincent said "Every pass has the same story around hear, but nobody knows the truth

for sure." Roman people, the origin of western history and culture, were afraid of Hannibal as a human eater. But Gaulish people who had been beaten by Roman army might take him for a hero and a savior. Most of them might have wanted to believe that Hannibal had passed through their own village to invade Roma in order to punish the Roman evil. We found a "Momotaro" legend in France.

Gradient was getting steeper and steeper like 3%, 5%, 6% from Valloire. The end of the valley, we looked at the knife curved road on the rock wall. We could not believe that elephants had climb the wall. Over 8 to 10 % slope for several km, we climbed up the 7% gradient easy open space where many cows were ringing bells. In final 2km, 8% and 10% slopes waited the competitors to win the Tour. Adrenalin was fully coming out!

Only small parking lots and road signs were at the top of the pass. We were able to enjoy spectacular mountain views, La Barre des Ecrins (4102m) in south, La Meije in southwest and Mont Blanc in far north. It was the special vista



point surrounded by higher peak than Mt. Fuji.

There was a gift shop and a monument of Henri Desgrange, the great father of Tour du France just behind the other side of the pass. When he originally included this pass in the course of the Tour, cyclists had to climb this pass on single



This slope has a chapel too



● Hotel Oberland contains some jerseys and historical souvenirs of the tours in house



.Gradient is 11% for next km, 12km to Madeleine pass

## Etape4: Prayer of Alpine people

Southern portion of Galibier Pass was registered as National Park so that natural resource of the Alps might be preserved. Mt La Meije was shining gloriously reflecting the morning sun. I saw a little chapel on the hill behind the hotel. Only 20m climbing allowed me to look out marvelous views of mountains. In mountain area, most of church gardens overflow with many tombs. Simple grave posts faced to Mt. La Meije, suspecting peoples prayed only to the god but to the mountain.

Today was another dreaming day. We were going to do time trial at L'Alpes D'Huez. We went down to Bourg d'Oisans on mostly easy down-hill road. In some part, we passed through a blind tunnel, so front and tail lump were mandatory. Sometime I ran singing "Hakone no yama ..." on the descending cliff road of a deep canyon. Once we turned right at the road sign, many cycling were passing by. We started every 2 minutes in order at the 0m sign.

First 2km which was extremely steep like 11% average suffered me because I did attacking from the beginning. Suddenly clouds appeared and made shade so that we did not feel so hot, however the gradient did not become easier. A chapel by the road was protecting both local people and challenging cyclists. Many riders on MTBs came down on dirt, because the upper part of this hill is ski slope. It might be more exciting to go down on MTB rather than road bike. Winner of our time trial was Lemi. He climbed the hill only 54 minutes! The result showed us how strong this sixteen years boy was. He had already won several local races before. It was much cooler and nicer in the village at the top. It became 36°C when we went down 1100m to the bottom. Over the village at the top, there was green cow field here and there in front of the beautiful views of snow covered high mountains. After picnic lunch, we enjoy half day off in the village as a reward.

The hotel we stayed was Hotel Oberland in Bourg d'Oisans listed in the Cicerone guide "Cycling in the French

## Etape 5: The heat of the tour remained on the pass

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Picnic style lunch, anytime, many kinds of cheeses amused us



Letters left after the Tour du France, we ran over the letters with affection

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The hotel we stayed was Hotel Oberland in Bourg d'Oisans listed in the Cicerone guide "Cycling in the French Alps". It was built in 1907, decorated with professional jerseys, bikes like a museum of the tour. We went to the town and tasted local bear.

## SAINT-SORLIN-D'ARVES

# Du pays du soleil levant au cœur des Arves, rencontre avec des vacanciers pas comme les autres

Reçu par Sato San lors d'un voyage au Japon, Vincent Orvelin responsable du Dojo chambérien, avait promis, en retour, une virée dans les Alpes.

Amateurs de vélo et spectateurs assidus du Tour de France, San Sato, accompagnés de deux amis, messieurs Shimada et Yamagushi, ont débarqué à Genève, samedi dernier, avec leurs bicyclettes, pour une randonnée depuis Albertville. Au programme : le col du Pré, le cormet de Roselend, le col de l'Iseran, puis le Télégraphe et le Galibier, une montée à l'Alpe d'Huez suivi du col de la

Croix de fer, et, pour finir, le col de Chaussy et la Madeleine.

Pour la logistique, madame Orvelin avait réservé gîtes et couverts pour cette semaine sur les cols les plus prestigieux et a suivi, en voiture, les trois Japonais heureux, mais fourbus. Ils auront le loisir de se reposer dans le long voyage de retour au pays du soleil levant.

Messieurs Sato, Shimada et Yamagushi (au centre de la photo).  
Photo DL/Éric AXELRAD



Japanese cyclist appeared to climb passes in this area, Dauphiné Libéré paper

## Etape 6: Corporation in life in Alps

Today is the last day of our tour. We are heading to Col du Mollard, Lacets de Montvernier, Col du Chaussy and Col de La Madeleine, finally to Albertville. Before the departure, the host came to take a picture of us with Pentax camera. He said he worked for local news paper. The picture of us in front of the pension appeared in the Dauphiné Libéré on 8<sup>th</sup> of August with his article. Title is "from the place the sun rises to the village in Alps".

Morning warm up was to climb col du Mollard then go down to Saint Jean de Maurienne in which the museum of Opinel knife was. It used to have been a factory. Christine was born in this town and her parents planned to offer us lunch at the top of the Lacets de Montvernier. But Lemi, who had gone to his gland parent's home to help them, called us that his gland father was sick and he had called a doctor. His grand father had been carried to the hospital before we arrived. We tasted home-made potato gratin and grilled chicken. Then we left for Chaussy pass praying his grand pa would be OK.

Over the pass, we could go down without any fear because the road had been repaired a year before. On the road side, old men in the village were firing a huge oven like a barn. They were going to bake breads for the

summer festival starting tomorrow. They shared a baking oven in the village. We could see how people had lived together in the mountain.

We started climbing the Madeleine pass at the second quarter of the slope. This was the last hill to the Albertville. We finally finished climbing. Mon Blanc appeared and celebrated us for completion of our Tour du France far from north. We took hot a tub and swam in the pool and relaxed at the spa center owned by Bernard Hinault then had dinner at the brasserie on the pass. Everybody gave a speech to appreciate efforts of planner and supporter, to tell about this wonderful short trip over roasted duck dished and glasses of vine de Savoie.

Especially, Christine was devoted to take care of us until the departure from France, even if her father was in the hospital. We became a kind of family through this trip. We exchanged words of the appreciation and hoped to meet again. Difficulties of passes and beautifulness of the scenes were beyond description. But what impressed me most were kindness, toughness and spirit of corporation in lives of the people. " Vincent, Gill and everybody, we shall go over Izoard pass, Bonnete pass and run into Mediterranean sea together!" We finished this trip with this promise made.