



HAUTE ROUTE

FRANCE

INTERVIEW

Jean François Alcan

«Ascent of the Lombarde on the Italian side is a real work in progress, with a winding road and high elevation gain»

MEGEVE

Rooted in cycling history

COL HISTORY

Two legends of cycling



IN THIS EDITION...

BEHIND THE SCENES

Interview of Jean François Alcan

.1

2025 RACE ROUTE

13 new climbs compared to 2024

.4

COLS HISTORY

Legendary passes : col d'Izoard and col du Galibier

.6

RIDER'S PROFILE

Interview of Maira Kiyomi Catenacci

.11

HOST CITIES FOCUS

Megève

.15

BEHIND THE SCENES

Race

We reveal the behind the scenes of the 2025 course with race course director, Jean-François Alcan





Even though many people already know you, can you introduce yourself?

Jean-François Alcan, race course director of the Haute Route, I was the creator of the famous Etape du Tour in 1993, when I left ASO I started a new adventure in 2011 by creating the Haute Route with Rémi Duchemin and Benjamin Chandelier. The Haute Route Alpes was the 1st event that has crossed France with editions all over the world.

My speciality is creating courses for amateurs and managing all the operational aspects of this type of race. I'm also in charge of relations with local authorities and state administrations.

As race director, you're the one who designs the courses. As the author of the new course, can you tell us how you came up with it?

The idea is to create stages that change from one year to the next, with a different gradient each day, so that all riders can realize their dream ... to be a "finisher" of the Haute Route. You have to add mythical cols for each day of the race, and that's what **I've done this year with the magical climbs that have made the history of the Tour de France.**

In 2025, the Haute Route will pass in Italy. Is this something new? Why Italy and Cuneo?

Not at all, this will be the 3rd time we've been to Cuneo, and passing through **Italy means climbing 2 legendary passes: the Col d'Agnel and the Col de la Lombarde.**

Like the Tour de France 2024, the final stage will be the time trial in Nice. Why this choice?

A little wink to the Tour! No, I wanted to do it the year of the Covid, but that was cancelled, so I kept it in mind, and Nice has been a partner of the event since its creation, so it's a gift, with the return along the seafront to the village, so it'll be a magical ride.

If we take the course, what do you think will be the most difficult day for the riders?

There are 3 stages with 3500 D+, so these will be the 3 hardest days, but the **3rd day with the Iseran ascent and the Telegraphe-Galibier link-up** will be the toughest for me.



We know that the Haute Route is all about climbing mythical passes, so which will be the most technical pass in this edition?

The most technical, not easy to say, but the ascent of the **Lombarde on the Italian side** is a real work in progress, with a winding road and high elevation gain

If you could give some advice to the 2025 participants, what would it be?

Accumulating kilometers, but with elevation gain—the Alpine passes can sometimes be very long, up to 30 kilometers.

And enjoy yourself without taking any risks. The spirit and DNA of our events is based on climbing these sometimes steep slopes, and the achievement is here and nowhere else. So take it easy on the way down!

Can you tell us something about road and rider safety?

The Haute Route course takes place on roads open to vehicle traffic. It will not be closed roads, but it will be secured as much as possible, and **riders will have right-of-way in timed sections.**

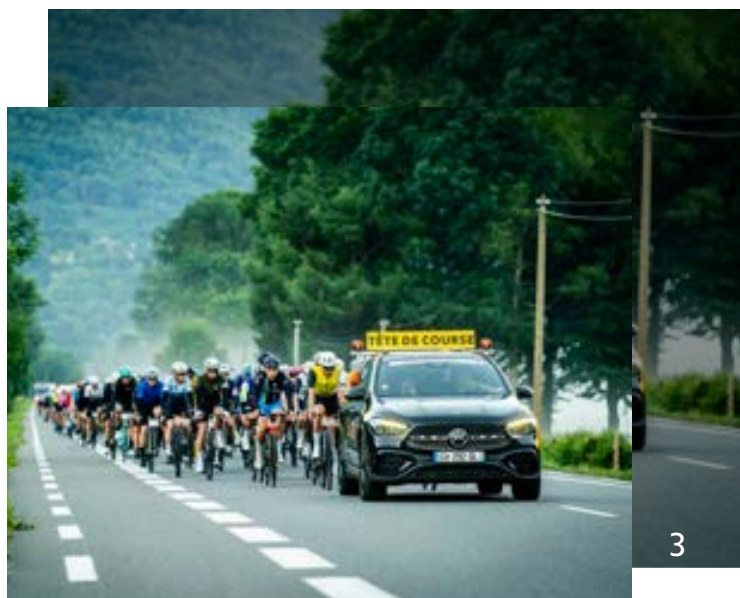
They will be riding on regular public roads, and it is important to keep this in mind at all times.

Several hundred signalmen will be positioned along the route to ensure the safety of the peloton and manage the right-of-way during the timed sections. In addition to **race director vehicles** (at the head, middle, and end of the peloton), **motorcyclists** specialized in cycling events will be accompanying Haute Route participants. **'Sweep' and 'End of Race' vehicles will close the course.**

Many descents are neutralized to ensure riders' safety; is that also the case this year? Will some still be timed?

There are almost no timed descents left on the Haute Route to minimize accidents, following requests from local authorities. This year, only small sections of descent will be timed

Jean François Alcan



2025 RACE ROUTE



2025 RACE ROUTE



COLS HISTORY

Col d'Izoard and Col du Galibier

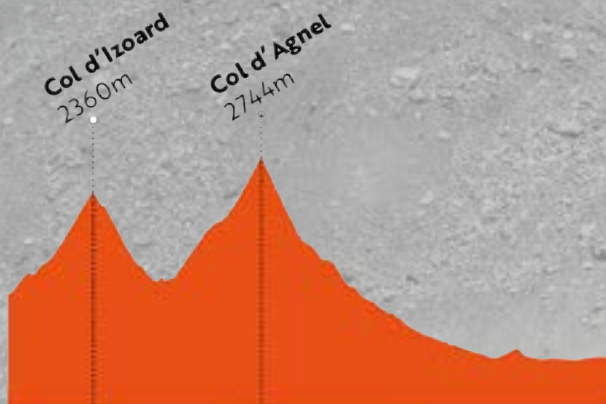


Col d'Izoard: A Lunar Landscape at 2,362 Meters



STAGE 4

Briançon
Briançon



STAGE 5

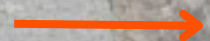
Briançon
Cuneo



Standing at **2,362 meters** above sea level, the Col d'Izoard is an iconic road in the Queyras massif in the Hautes-Alpes. Originally built as a military route due to its strategic location near the French-Italian border, it is now a favorite destination for hundreds of cyclists from around the world.

The Izoard is a legendary site for both amateur and professional cycling events. It has been crossed **7 times** in the Giro d'Italia and **36 times** in the Tour de France. Some of the greatest cycling champions have conquered this pass, including Phillippe Thys, Henri Pelissier, Gino Bartali, Sylvère Maes, Louison Bobet, Federico Bahamontes, Eddy Merckx, Bernard Thévenet, Andy Schleck, and most recently, **Warren Barguil in 2017**, when he set a record on the southern ascent with a time of 38 minutes and 15 seconds.

The climb of this mythical col can be tackled from two sides: the North or the South. For the **first time this year**, the Haute Route decided that participants would climb the Izoard from **both directions**.



The Southern Side

On Wednesday, August 27, the riders started with **the most famous ascent**: the southern side. Starting from Guillestre, this climb covers **31 kilometers**, includes sections with a gradient of up to **11%**, and passes through the striking **Casse Déserte**.

The first 15 kilometers are relatively gentle, with gradients between 1.5% and 3.5%, offering a chance to enjoy the scenery. But the real challenge begins in the final 14 kilometers, with an average gradient of 7.5% and sections reaching 9% to 10%. After winding through forested switchbacks, the landscape opens up, revealing the Arvieux Valley and the breathtaking Casse Déserte.

Here, the rocky, **lunar-like scenery features** orange-tinged peaks, natural arches, and jagged formations. As you pass the monument to Louison Bobet and Fausto Coppi—two legends of cycling—you'll know the summit is near. The last two kilometers at 9% lead to the top of the Izoard, surrounded by the stunning alpine mountains.

The Northern Side

From Briançon 28th August, the northern ascent to the Izoard summit is **19 kilometers** long, with an average gradient of **6%**. This side is less difficult, with gradients ranging between 2% and 6% at the start. However, it's important to pace yourself and save energy for the steeper sections near Cervières.

This historic village, located between the 9th and 10th kilometer, marks the start of the tougher climb, with gradients of 7% to 8.5% and even short sections at 9%. After reaching the Napoleon Refuge at 2,265 meters, you'll leave the forest behind and enter a rocky, open landscape. The final switchbacks will lead you to the summit of the col.

The View Worth the Effort

Whether you climb from the northern or southern side, take your time at the summit to admire the incredible views of the surrounding mountains, valleys, and the Casse Déserte. This unforgettable experience is a reward for every cyclist who takes on the challenge of the Col d'Izoard.

Col du Galibier: The Legend of Cycling



STAGE 3

Tignes
Serre Chevalier

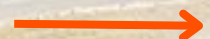
Perched at an altitude of **2,642 meters**, the Col du Galibier is a legendary landmark in both the Alps and cycling history. Straddling the border between the Savoie (Valloire) and Hautes-Alpes (Briançon) departments, the Galibier is the **4th highest paved pass in the French Alps** (behind Col de l'Iseran at 2,764m, Col Agnel at 2,744m, and Col de la Bonette at 2,715m) and arguably the most famous in the world.

This historic pass has been a must-see stage of the Tour de France, with **37 climbs recorded since 1947**. Originally classified as a first-category climb, it was upgraded to "Hors Catégorie" in 1979. In 2024, Slovenian cyclist Tadej Pogacar reached the summit first.

In **1998**, during the Grenoble–Les Deux Alpes stage of the Tour de France, **Marco Pantani** made the Galibier truly legendary. Battling through heavy rain, he launched a decisive attack on the climb, leaving all rivals, including Jan Ullrich, far behind. Pantani crossed the finish line at Les Deux Alpes with a stunning **10-minute lead**. That same year, he achieved the **rare double victory**, winning both the **Giro d'Italia** and the **Tour de France**. In 2011, a memorial to Pantani was erected on the northern side of the climb and can be seen during the ascent.

Other races also take advantage of the Galibier's legendary status, including the Critérium du Dauphiné and the Giro d'Italia. The Haute Route has also crossed the Galibier six times: in 2011, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023.

There are two main ways to climb the Col du Galibier: the southern route and the northern route.



The Southern Route

Starting from **Briançon**, the climb is **34 kilometers** long with **1,398 meters of elevation gain**. After passing the Col du Lautaret, there are still 8.6 kilometers to go, with an average gradient of **7%**. The final kilometer is especially challenging, with a 9.5% gradient. Along the way, a memorial to Henri Desgrange marks the last stretch. **Desgrange** was a cyclist best known for **creating the first Tour de France in 1903** with his assistant, Géo Lefevre, and serving as the Tour's first director.

The Northern Route

Starting from **Saint-Michel-de-Maurienne**, this climb is considered the most iconic. It begins with the **Col du Télégraphe**, a 12-kilometer ascent averaging a 6% gradient. After completing this first stage, cyclists face the **17-kilometer** climb to the Galibier from Valloire. At 2,000 meters, the landscape opens up, and each hairpin turn offers breathtaking views, making the Galibier both a physical challenge and a visual adventure.

Weather Conditions

The Col du Galibier is closed in winter, with snow clearing usually **starting in April**. By late May, the Galibier Tunnel, located below the pass, typically opens, allowing access to the Col du Lautaret and the Hautes-Alpes department. Clearing the pass itself takes longer, as the road is often buried under several meters of snow, sometimes as deep as **10 meters**.

The reopening of the Galibier is a significant event, marking the arrival of warmer weather and the start of the summer season. Generally open from **June to September**, the climb is considered a high-altitude experience with unpredictable conditions. Even in summer, cold temperatures and strong winds can catch climbers off guard, so bringing an extra jacket is highly recommended.

The Galibier: A Timeless Icon

The Col du Galibier continues to leave its mark on the world of cycling and remains an unforgettable challenge for riders from around the globe.

A female cyclist is shown in profile, leaning forward in a racing position on a road bike. She is wearing a white helmet with 'POC' branding, orange-tinted sunglasses, and a blue and black cycling jersey with 'KAPHA' and white stripes on the sleeve. Her hair is in a braid. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with greenery and a clear sky.

RIDERS PROFILE

Maíra Kiyomi Catenacci

Ambassador for many years, Maira tells us about her experience as a participant and her Haute Route adventures.

Can you introduce yourself for those who don't know you ?

My name is **Maíra Kiyomi Catenacci, Brazilian** (from São Paulo), I'm 40 years old, married, and I have two young daughters. I am an advertising professional and a psychologist, and an eternal sports lover. **I've been a high-performance cyclist for 7 years**, dedicating myself to the sport as a way to improve my quality of life.

How many times have you taken part in the Haute Route?

2024 was the year I completed my **third Haute Route** (previous races: HR Alps 2022, HR Dolomites 2023, and HR Alps 2024).

Why do you come back every year?

I return to the Haute Route because it was where I understood that cycling goes far beyond results and numbers. **It's a challenge that transforms you as a person, not just as a cyclist.** You have the opportunity to observe, engage with, and learn from people of different nationalities, all with diverse stories, but at the same time, everyone is seeking the same thing: **self-overcoming**.

What do you like best about the Haute Route?

What I love most about the race is the chance to **connect with people from different nationalities**, learn about different stories, and enjoy riding the most iconic and legendary mountains in the world.

What do you think of the Haute Route itineraries?

I don't know of any other race that is as tough yet beautiful as the Haute Route. The course is **incredibly challenging**, but it is also blessed with indescribable **natural beauty**. Reaching the city of Nice and feeling the joy of the place, along with the local infrastructure, is truly the "cherry on top."

What do you think of the organization?



I couldn't imagine the complexity of an event like the Haute Route until I experienced the challenge firsthand. I **find it incredible, and a huge privilege, how the organization manages the logistics over 7 days.** From luggage transfers to the race village, it's truly admirable.

What would you say to people who are hesitating to sign up?

I have no doubt that once cyclists learn about the challenge, **the Haute Route becomes a bucket-list event for all of them.** We know that the investment, both in terms of time and finances, is substantial. But the experience is so transformative that it is worth every bit of effort.

Maíra Kiyomi Catenacci





HOST CITIES

Megève



Megève : The Premier Destination for Cyclists

Located in the heart of the Mont-Blanc massif, just **one hour** from Geneva, Annecy, Chambéry, and Chamonix, and **two hours** from Lyon, all roads lead to Megève. This Alpine village, a true gem nestled in the heart of the Alps, offers easy and quick access for cycling enthusiasts seeking an exceptional setting. With top-tier infrastructure, unspoiled nature, and an exceptional lifestyle, Megève is a **must-visit** destination for **cycling lovers and athletes** in search of **performance and recovery**.

An Ideal Training Ground

Megève is a paradise for cyclists. Its winding roads, iconic mountain passes, and breathtaking views provide perfect training conditions and routes, whether you're an amateur or a professional. With direct access to legendary climbs such as the Col de l'Épine, Col des Aravis, and Col des Saisies, **Megève offers a variety of challenging routes that are ideal for pushing your limits**. For those who prefer mountain trails, the region's MTB and gravel paths allow you to explore wild landscapes far from the hustle and bustle.

State-of-the-Art Sports Facilities

A haven for sports and relaxation for 50 years, Megève boasts the largest indoor and outdoor sports complex in the Alps: **Le Palais de Megève**. This cutting-edge facility, dedicated to performance and recovery, spans 33,000 m² across 10 specialized areas. It includes a weight training gym, training pools, an ice rink, and spaces for various sports activities. This unique venue is essential for optimizing physical preparation or unwinding after intense effort.

Peak-Level Recovery and Wellness

After the effort comes comfort. Megève stands out with its exceptional wellness offerings, featuring no fewer than 17 spas and fitness areas, including a 600m² aquatic zone with balneotherapy, wellness treatments, and care services. Whether you're looking for a restorative massage, a sauna session, or a revitalizing treatment, everything is **designed to promote recovery** in a relaxing and luxurious environment.



The Capital of Alpine Gastronomy

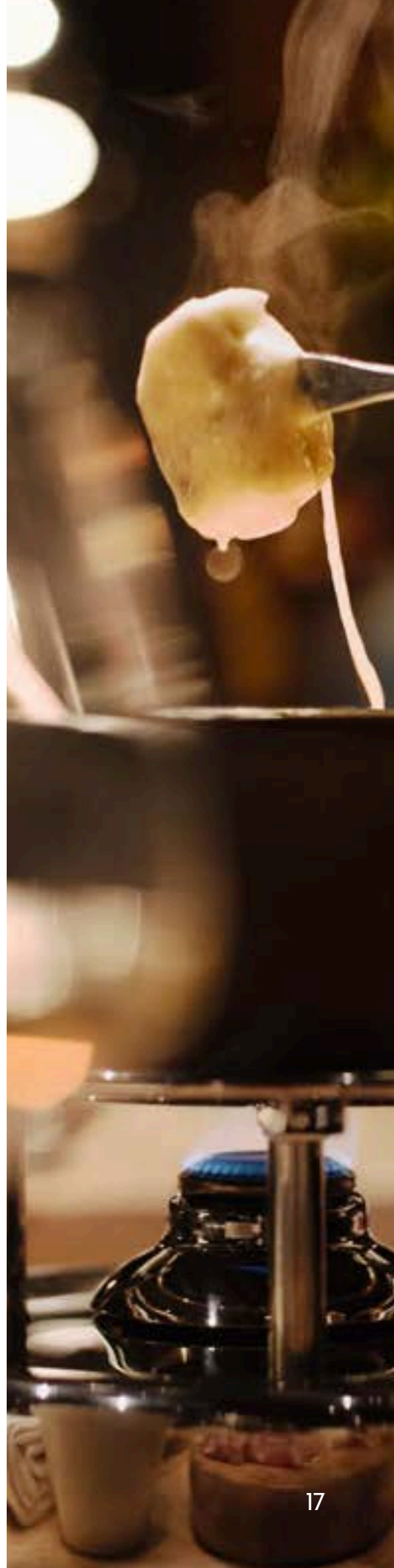
When it comes to gastronomy, Megève shines as the **capital of Alpine cuisine**. With 135 restaurants, bars, and festive venues, including **Michelin-starred** and **Gault & Millau**-recognized establishments, the village promises an unmatched culinary experience. Talented chefs reinvent local flavors to deliver delicious and balanced meals, perfect for athletes.

An Authentic and Vibrant Village

Beyond sports, Megève charms visitors with its **authenticity** and **warm ambiance**. Its cobblestone streets, elegant boutiques, year-round events, and preserved heritage make it a destination that combines **sports and conviviality**.

Whether you're seeking **performance**, **wellness**, or simply a sporting escape in an exceptional setting, Megève embodies the perfect blend of sport, nature, and lifestyle.

More information here





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