

660 m



640 m



Móstoles / 650 m

Brunete / 650 m

Villaviciosa de Odón / 615 m

Móstoles / 665 m

Fuenlabrada / 660 m

Leganés / 675 m

Madrid / 640 m
(Primer paso por Meta)



Madrid / 640 m
(Tercer paso por Meta)

4,1

19,4

35,8

42,2

51,5

59

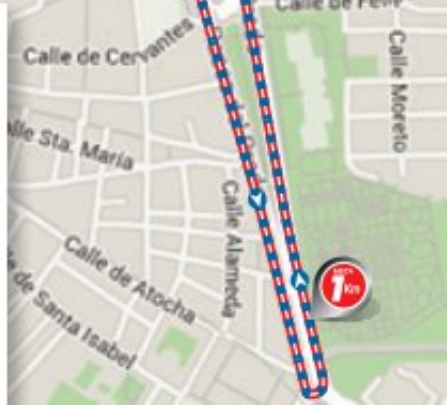
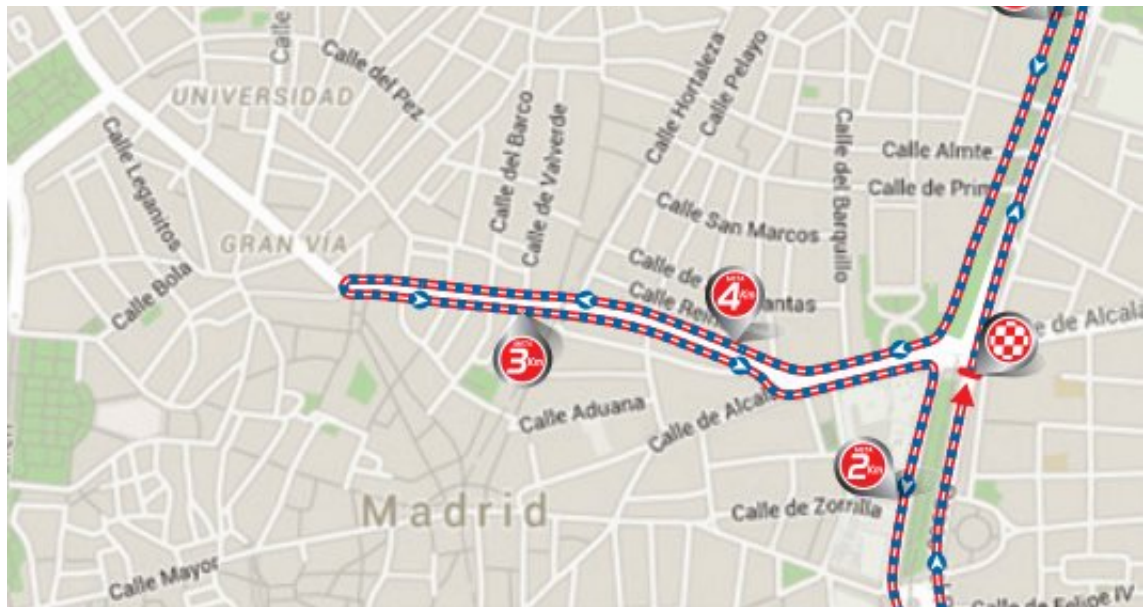
72,8

84

0 km

117,6 km









sadness, for having completed another year. Although we feel that we have accomplished something when we reach the final stage, we must remember it is the cyclists who have accomplished much more, and deserve their rest.

Many of us have hung together for some years. We remember when news of cycling met a weekly wrap up on CBS, Sunday afternoons in July, of that week's Tour de France stages. I suppose this started, per force, when Greg Lemond started to win. When stages of all the grand tours came onto OLN in the States, many of us were happy. Then, there were also daily newspaper notices, small notices on page 4 or 5 of the sports section, but at least for the Tour they were there, and sometimes for the Vuelta and Giro.

I have to admit that in those years, the late 1990s, I mostly followed the video feed, with occasional consultations with the Live Update Guy. Sometime in the early 2000s, I knew something about the places where the Tour was passing, so I posted a comment. LUG said something about it being cool that someone had been where the cyclists were going, so I put together a few paragraphs, and the essays were born. Early on, I did not prepare one every day, but when I knew something, or thought I knew something, I posted an essay.

Charles was gracious enough to post almost all of them, depending on time. When he started law school we would email, or I would light a candle when he had a tough exam. When he was let go and went, well, what can we call we lugnuts? When he went "rogue" and had the cancer scare, I promised a daily essay, and tried to fulfill that. In this wonderful, but poor stepchild of a nutpub, I do what I can! We are so lucky to maintain this relationship with each other, so great to talk about cycling, even as the media has regressed to early 1990s standards (thank goodness for the internet and "live feeds.")

I think I enjoy the Vuelta most. I have lived in Spain, studied the literature and culture, and can hold forth on almost any topic Spanish, with little compunction or worry that I might make a misstep. I also used to have a fairly good handle on the Spanish riders and teams, Roberto Heras was my favorite. I am not sure I could say that anymore, once Alberto Contador is gone. I always hope to bring something different to my essays, not always about cycling, that will enrich a life, or cause someone to think about something not in their normal perspective.

For a fan, cycling is an unusual sport. It is eminently a team sport, but eminently individual too. No one wins a Tour without the support of his entire team, or most of it. Cyclists, though, don't remain loyal to a team, nor do the team sponsors remain loyal. So, each year, some teams fade out of existence, some cyclists will switch from team to team. There have been a few teams based on local territory, such as the old Euskatel/Euskadi, but very few are. Fans of some countries cheer for the team sponsored by a local company, but other than that it is a shifting no man's land. I had great fun with the Cannondale team this year, but I only ride Trek, if I can help it, and I don't even know what a Drapac is. I am so glad they have survived, and have contributed to their Green Bay type project, but I will certainly follow some of the cyclists I know from there as they move along to other teams.

There is something about Spain that is just so, well, Spanish. Castizo is a word the Spaniards use, to indicate being just so, well, Spanish. So many Americans think that Spain is bullfighting and mantillas and machismo and tacos, and it is that, well, minus the tacos. It is so much more, and I hope to bring a bit of that to you when we cover the Vuelta. Madrid is very castizo, as it was essentially created, built, by the Spaniards, after the battles had ended, as their imperial city. The ancient village, which was tiny, was named for a creek which ran between a rocky crag and fell into a waterfall down the cliff. The Arabic word for that is, or at least was, *matrit*. The Bourbon Royal Palace was built near that cliff, (where there is a short lover's leap bridge, the bridge is extremely short, but the crag is very deep), but the city had already started to spread under the Hapsburgs. Madrid, in many ways, is younger than cities like Boston, but most of it was finished by the time of Carlos III, the Bourbon king at the end of the 1700s, who laid on the finishing touches and formed it as it is today. Madrid is, as the Eurosport Italian commentator just said "one of the most beautiful European Capitals."

In Spain each university has a Tuna, as do many other student groups. A Tuna in Spain is not the fish, it is a medievally dressed string band, with all manner of stringed instruments, mandolins, guitars, etc., and generally 15 to 25 players and singers for a performance. They sing many folk songs, songs written for Zarzuelas, adapted Flamenco hits, and medieval and modern numbers, always with great energy. I believe it is the Zarzuela, a kind of Spanish opera, often concentrating on the common folk, which gives us songs in the form of a "chotis." (Schottische is the direct translation, but it is typically modified in the Spanish fashion).

Enjoy the Vuelta. Enjoy the Winter!

Today I will leave you with a song of Madrid, or of love, or of excess, normally sung by a Tuna, but also available on Youtube sung by Plácido Domingo or countless others, it is called "Madrid"

Cuando llegues a Madrid, chulona mía
voy a hacerte emperatriz de Lavapies;
y alfombrate con claveles la Gran Vía,
y a bañarte con vino de Jerez.
En Chicote, un agasajo postinero
con la crema de la intelectualidad
y la gracia de un pipro retrechero
más castizo que la calle de Alcalá.

Madrid, Madrid, Madrid,
pedazo de la España en que nací
por algo te hizo Dios
la cuna del requiebro y del chotis.
Madrid, Madrid, Madrid,
en Méjico se piensa mucho en tí
por el sabor que tienen tus verbenas
por tantas cosas buenas
que soñamos desde aquí;
y vas a ver lo que es canela fina
y arma la tremolina
cuando llegues a Madrid.
-Agustín Lara.

Here is an extremely quick translation,
not up, perhaps, to my usual standards, sorry about that:

When you get to Madrid, my little lamb chop
I am going to make you the Empress of Lavapies;
and carpet the Gran Vía with carnations for you,
and soak you in a sherry shower bath.
In the Chicote Cocktail Bar, a posh warm welcome,
by the cream of the intelligentsia
and a bonus many charming compliments,
more castizo than even Alcalá Street.

Madrid, Madrid, Madrid,
piece of the Spain in which I was born
for some reason God made you
the cradle of sweet nothings and of the Chotis.
Madrid, Madrid, Madrid,
in Mexico you are thought of often
for the taste of your festivals
and for so many good things
that we dream of from here;
and you're going to see what that good stuff is,
what a fuss we'll make,
when you arrive in Madrid.





