



SUANCES
60 m



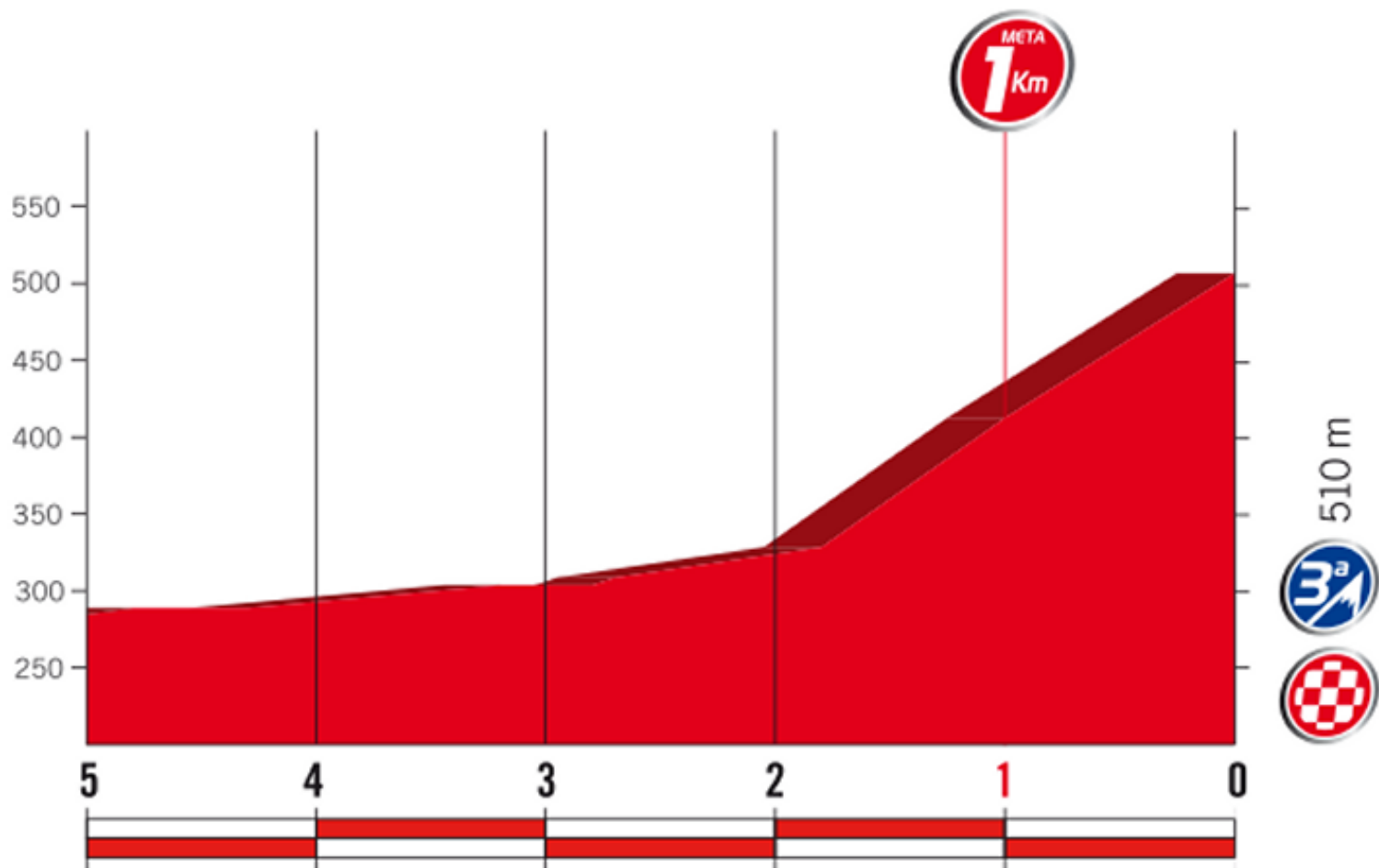
SANTO TORIBIO DE LIÉBANA
510 m

Alto de Sto. Toribio de Liébana / 510 m



0 km

169 km







Abraham Lincoln
FAT TIRE JUMPER







"YOU ASKED FOR A SECOND OPINION. YOU DIDN'T SAY
IT COULDN'T BE A HORSE."

"Caminante no hay camino," sang the 1970s-1980s Spanish pop-rock group Mocedades. They were the 9 member Spanish group, from the Basque Country, runner up in the 1974 Eurovision contest with their similarly pop rock song "Eres tú." They did not write the lyrics to "Caminante no hay camino." Instead these were the title and a verse of a poem written by one of the bright lights of the "Generación de '98," Antonio Machado.

I thought of these words, this poem, these celebrities, upon seeing that the Vuelta Stage today begins at Suances, a beautiful natural place where two Spanish rivers meet up, before flowing into the Cantabrian Sea. The rivers kind of merge as they are flowing into the sea. Much as riders in a peloton, flowing and ebbing. Suances is also an ancient place of habitation. A very significant reminder of this is the cave of "Las Brujas", an archeological site of paintings made with the hands, from the Paleolithic era. Just as we wrote about a Jubilee Year and large portion of the Cross a few weeks ago, Santo Toribio monastery, at the finishing site of today's stage of Santo Toribio de Liébana, likewise celebrates a jubilee year this year. As the Vuelta website says "The Vuelta will honour history by arriving at the foot of the Santo Toribio de Liébana Monastery, a building where Franciscans keep the Lignum Crucis, the largest piece of Christ's cross still in existence... Pilgrims arrive en masse on the years when Santo Toribio's Feast Day (16th of April) falls on a Sunday." Indeed, the entire year is celebrated as a Jubilee so even today's riders can gain their indulgence by visiting Santo Toribio today.

But still, I am thinking "Caminante no hay camino..."

Antonio Machado, along with his brother Manuel, and many other writers whose names you would certainly recognize, were members of the Generation of '98. We often hear of the effects of yellow journalism in the States, but we don't think of its effects elsewhere. The Spanish American War, in 1898, took from Spain her last Colonies, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. The entire country, which since the start of the Reconquista in 718 had been in a constant state of expansion and agitation (we remember the end of the Reconquista meant the start of another great effort, taking place as it did in 1492). Suddenly Spain was left only with her thoughts, with her weeping and yearning after past glory lost, and a soul searching as to what the country should do then? These ruminations were fed by that whole generation of authors, who exalted Spain, mostly in her rural manifestations, her natural beauty, and her folklore, while acknowledging that their focus had been lost. No longer would they rule any portion of the seas, no longer maintain a special relationship with foreign places.

Certainly we could start our own ruminations. Imagine if mid-century Cuba had been still attached to Spain, like a French overseas territory. Imagine if Philippines had remained in Spanish hands, and then official neutral in the Second World War. So much to think about...

A Cuban friend of mine told me that all of her ancestors, even the ones who had settle Cuba, were born in Spain, until her father's time. The pregnant mother would board a ship in the last months of pregnancy, sail to Spain, have the baby, and then return to Cuba. Her grandmother missed the boat so her father, unlike his other brothers and sisters, was the first of their family born in Cuba in 100 years. Such was the attachment of the Spaniards to their colonists, such was lost in that war in 1898.

The Generation of 1898 would not forget it, and while the rest of Europe reveled in the turn of the century Belle Epoque, most Spaniards would have none of that, instead concentrating on what they could do differently, what might they do better, now that they were left completely to their own devices.

Machado's poem is typical of the ruminations in which they were engaged, while remaining a beautiful and evocative sentiment, which still speaks to us today:

Caminante, son tus huellas el camino y nada más;	Traveler, your footsteps are the path and nothing more;
Caminante, son tus huellas el camino y nada más;	Traveler, your footsteps are the path and nothing more;
caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.	traveler, there is no path, the path is made by walking.
Al andar se hace camino, y al volver la vista atrás se ve la senda que nunca se ha de volver a pisar.	Walking makes the road, and turning to look behind you see the trail that you will never tread again.
Caminante, no hay camino, sino estelas en la mar.	Wanderer, there is no path, only the ripples left on the sea.

Is this a person walking along the beach? Is this a cyclist heading for a Jubilee Year Encounter with the Holy Cross? Is this a Jewish teacher in a Muslim school? Is this a frustrated Lugnuts, realizing there is no more LUG?

Caminante no hay camino, sino estelas en la mar.

Have a good day! Enjoy the Vuelta.

