

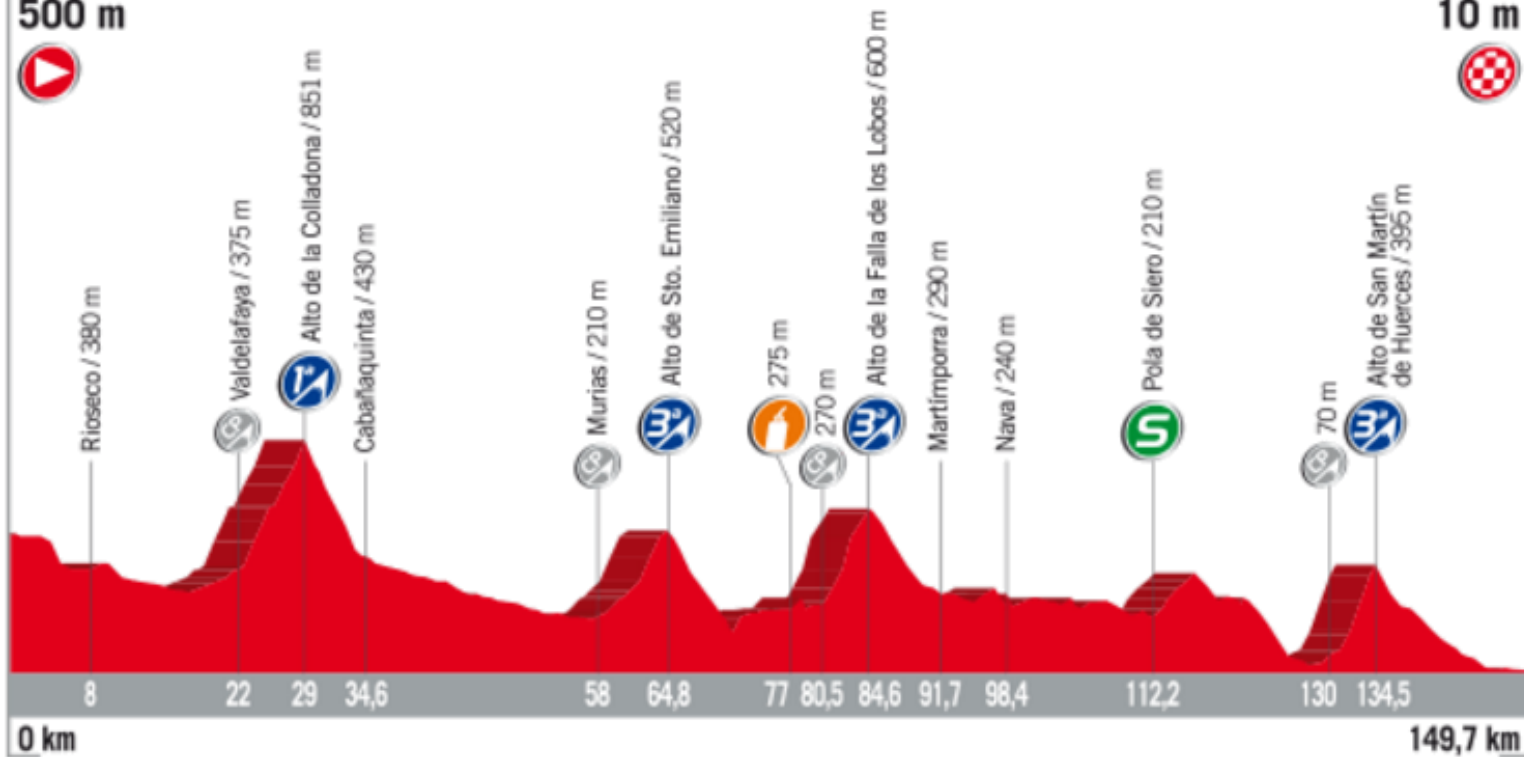
CASO. PARQUE NATURAL DE REDES

500 m



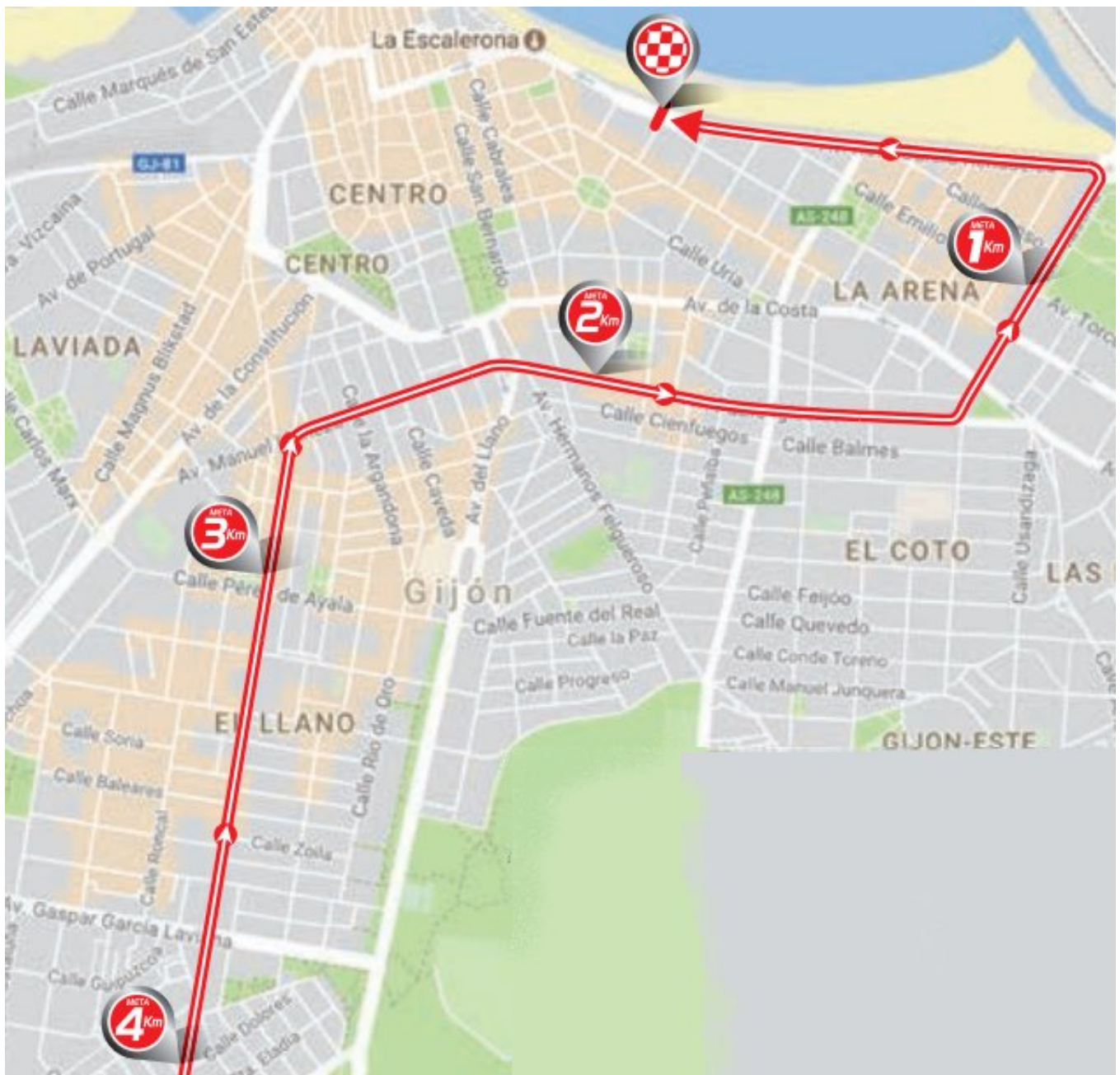
GIJÓN

10 m



0 km

149,7 km



Oviedo and Asturias reveal, to many, what Spain is really all about. It was here, in 718, that the first Asturian king, Pelayo, won the first battle of the Reconquista. The Moors had swept in, and across the entire peninsula, in 711, and finally Pelayo, who had been involved in agricultural work in some regard, rose to the occasion to defend his homeland against the new Overlords. The victory, high up in the mountains at Covadonga, was the ignition to seven hundred years of battling, to retake lands, and extend further freedoms, to those who were being oppressed throughout the peninsula.

As I mentioned previously, in another essay, although Spaniards have respect for authority, there is still a general feeling of equality. There is no coronation ceremony for Spanish kings and queens, who have never been given to wear crowns, perhaps coincidentally. Since the genesis of modern Spain, in those mountain passes of the Asturias, fellow kings and queens and dukes and marchionesses have been seen to be at least equivalent to the king, and some, perhaps, even more noble. These "Grandes" or grandees in English, could, or can, I suppose, leave their hats on in the presence of the king, and did not have to pay him the marks of respect which "normal people" would.

"Normal people," is another concept which has had variant meanings in Spain, rather than in the rest of Europe certainly.

While historically, the poor and what is called today middle class lived and worked on the grounds of monasteries and in towns, they were extended rights which were not common throughout Europe. El Cid Campeador (the first was a title of respect given to him by Arabic speakers, the second by Spaniards), Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, became a great military leader during his lifetime (11th century). It was said of him, though, "Oh Dios que buen vasallo, se tuviese buen Señor." He became a friend to the king, and then was betrayed by him, as kings involve in wheeling and dealing, politics which often do not respect friendship or honor. History recognized this, and so one of the verses in the epic poem about the Cid's life was that line in Spanish above, something like "oh God, what a good vassal he was, if he had only had a good Lord." (loosely translated for dramatic effect and meaning, as always...) When his legitimate king ordered him into exile, El Cid fought for the Moorish rulers of Zaragoza, against their own Moorish enemies, who often had Christian allies. El Cid, finally was returned from exile, and swore allegiance to his King in Asturias, Alfonso, but exercised great autonomy by sweeping down across the peninsula, finally taking Valencia from the Moors, and himself ruling as prince over a pluralistic society.

In the Renaissance, this idea of a certain equality, as well as obligations by the local nobility towards "peasants" is still very strong in Spain. Lope de Vega, who reportedly wrote 2000 plays in the Spanish Golden Age, is perhaps best known for his play Fuenteovejuna (unfortunately called "The Sheep Well" in English). In the play the local randy noble goes too far with the honor of a young lady, and is dispatched from this mortal coil by the men in her life. When the crime is investigated, the response is given by all the people that the village carried out the crime. When asked who specifically, the people all say "Fuenteovejuna." When punishment appears ready to rain down on them all, the King of Spain, Felipe, appears, and says that there will be no punishment, that the village did right in bringing an end to such a tyrannical nobleman. In other places that would be radical stuff for 1600, but in Spain, popular entertainment, and written by a holy priest.

You can see remnants from the time of El Cid throughout the province of Oviedo, through which our brave cyclists ride today. Although they don't traverse the Capital city of the Asturias, Oviedo, they do skirt it and arrive at the largest city of the modern province, Gijón. In this area are found dolmens which are reported from 5000 B.C., but not a lot more of historical significance, since the town remained very small until trade began in earnest with the United States in the 1800s.

Enjoy the Vuelta. Enjoy the day!

- 1 Thomas De Gendt (Bel) Lotto Soudal 3:35:46
- 2 Jarlinson Pantano (Col) Trek-Segafredo
- 3 Ivan Garcia Cortina (Spa) Bahrain-Merida
- 4 Rui Alberto Faria da Costa (Por) UAE Team Emirates
- 5 Floris De Tier (Bel) Team LottoNL-Jumbo
- 6 Bob Jungels (Lux) Quick-Step Floors
- 7 Romain Bardet (Fra) AG2R La Mondiale
- 8 Nicolas Roche (Irl) BMC Racing Team
- 9 Daniel Navarro Garcia (Spa) Cofidis, Solutions Credits
- 10 Koen Bouwman (Ned) Team LottoNL-Jumbo 0:00:45

General classification after stage 19:

- 1 Christopher Froome (GBr) Team Sky 75:51:51
- 2 Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Bahrain-Merida 0:01:37
- 3 Wilco Kelderman (Ned) Team Sunweb 0:02:17
- 4 Ilnur Zakarin (Rus) Katusha-Alpecin 0:02:29
- 5 Alberto Contador Velasco (Spa) Trek-Segafredo 0:03:34
- 6 Miguel Angel Lopez (Col) Astana Pro Team 0:05:16
- 7 Michael Woods (Can) Cannondale-Drapac 0:06:33
- 8 Fabio Aru (Ita) Astana Pro Team 0:06:33
- 9 Wout Poels (Ned) Team Sky 0:06:47
- 10 Steven Kruijswijk (Ned) Team LottoNL-Jumbo 0:10:26