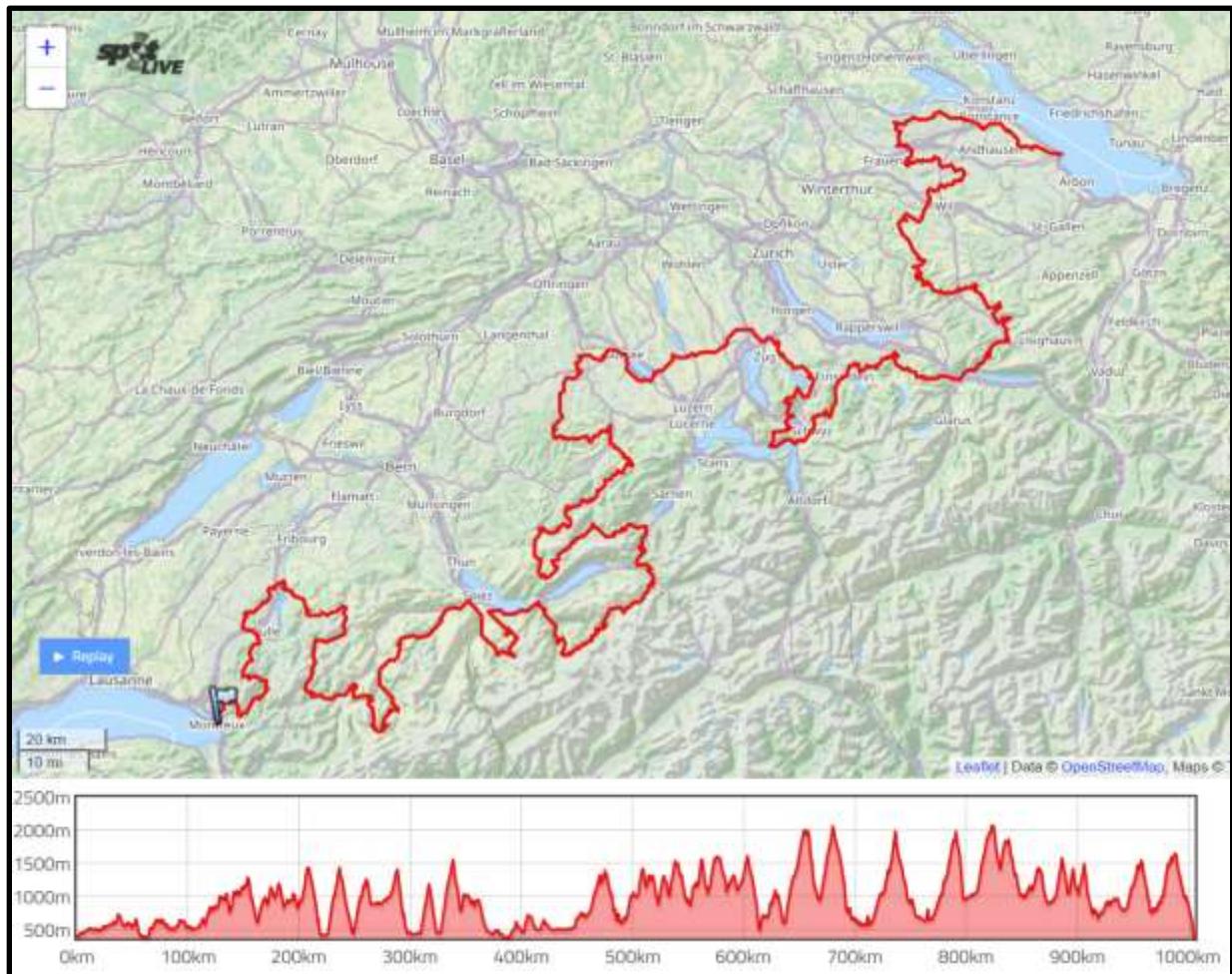


Hope 1000 Race Report

[Eric Schmidt](#), June 2025

Overview

The [Hope 1000](#) is a 1000 km (620 mile) bikepacking race across Switzerland. It starts in Romanshorn and finishes at the Freddie Mercury statue in Montreux. The race is founded and operated by [Willi Felix](#), a Swiss cyclist who owns a small business that imports bicycle components and is an expert route planner. His lovely family and some friends help out with logistics during the race. The race has been going since 2015 and was originally inspired by the Great Divide Mountain Biking Route ([GDMBR](#)) from Canada to Mexico along the rockies. Like the GDMBR, racers must be entirely self-sufficient. There are no support cars, mechanics, or outside assistance allowed. The Hope 1000 route is broken into 11 sections (you can find a nice overview from Lael Wilcox [here](#)) and is almost the same every year, only with slight deviations as results of diligent scouting prior to the actual race. The route is mostly off-road, and the paved roads it does take are usually quiet back roads with very few cars. The route is challenging mostly due to its elevation profile— the route involves almost 30,000 m (100,000' ft) of vertical climbing! Some of the ascents have very steep sections requiring “hike-a-bike”. In 2025 there were 93 entrants; about 60 completed the race while another 30 “scratched” for various reasons.



Eric's Ride

I successfully completed the Hope 1000 in 8 days, 4 hours, and 56 minutes, with a riding time of approximately ~81 hours! You can see the overall details of my ride [here](#) (and the overall results of the 2025 race [here](#)). I am very happy to finish the race successfully— I was not able to train as much as I had hoped due to work and Luna (our new dog), so the longest ride I had done on my mountain bike prior to this race was ~4 hours... a far cry from the back to back 10+ hour days I rode during the event 😅. I am very pleased to know that my body (and mind) are able to adapt to spending so much time on the bike! During the ride I felt a lot like [Ken](#) who's full time job is just "beach" in the new Barbie movie— for this random week in June my job was just "bike". I would eat a lot, sleep some, but otherwise all my time was spent riding or pushing my bike.



Pre Race: January to June 2025

I had heard about the Hope 1000 a few years ago (I think because of [Lael Wilcox](#)!). After moving to Switzerland in 2024 to finally cohabit with my wonderful wife Marta in Geneva, it seemed like an obvious "bike challenge" to aspire to! Biking has been part of my daily life since ~2005(?) but it's been a few years since I've had a proper bike project or challenge to get excited about.

At first I thought maybe I could ride the Hope 1000 on my gravel bike, since there are reports of others who have done that. In April 2025 I did a [test ride](#) of the last part of the route (the bit that's closest to Geneva) and that convinced me that I needed a proper mountain bike. The trails are very steep and quite technical. My gravel bike has rim brakes and high top tube... after the ~5 hour ride my insides felt a bit too shaken up for my liking.

I started looking for a second hand mountain bike that I could get excited about. I usually try to avoid buying new bikes, since there are generally lots of great lightly-used bikes for sale (especially in wealthy areas... SF, Geneva). I'm a fan of hardtails, and steel frames in general, so I was very pleased when I found a Production Privee Shan steel hardtail frame for sale by someone who worked at CERN. I tried the bike out and immediately knew it was the one! It's a super comfy frame with big brakes, low gears, and a nice fork.

I was surprised to see how much I “overpacked” when I showed up in Romanshorn. My setup was one of the heaviest at the starting line. I had some changes of clothes, non bike shoes, 2.25l of water, spare parts, tools, camping setup (bivy sack, sleeping bag, mat, tarp), lights, battery pack, wool base layers, rain gear, warm clothing, and a number of other little things that added up to quite a bit in total. My bike alone weighs 14kg, and fully loaded I think I had another 13kg, so the whole “rig” was about 27kg. Some folks had ~10kg bikes and ~4kg of stuff, so almost half the weight 😬.



Day 1: Saturday June 14th

The Hope 1000 is not exactly a mass start—entrants are assigned a start time based on their age. The oldest folks (guys in their late 60s/early 70s!) started at 6:00am, I started near the back at 06:28. I think the youngest guy started around 6:35. I say “guys” because this year there were only three women 😳!

The first section is quite easy in terms of elevation and went by really quickly. It was neat to pass and be passed by folks (to chat and compare setups). I met quite a few other racers! It got quite warm on this day, with my bike computer reading ~35° C (95° F) at some point. There was a NASTY steep hike-a-bike hill on the beginning of sector 2 where I started to realize how steep some of the hills would be. I started to overheat about two thirds of the way up the hill and laid down in the shade for 45min to cool off, which worked wonders. In general the heat and poor sleep in the Romanshorn hostel from the night before made me feel pretty bad this first day... I had major doubts about how the next ~900+ km were going to go!

At about 8pm I was very tired and getting sore, so I stopped with 2 other guys to eat dinner at [Restaurant Churfirsten](#). I had a DELICIOUS Rösti (fried potatoes with cheese and egg), a huge ice cream, and then ended up staying the night in a cute little room for 50 CHF (~\$60, cheap by Swiss standards). The shower and bed felt super good!



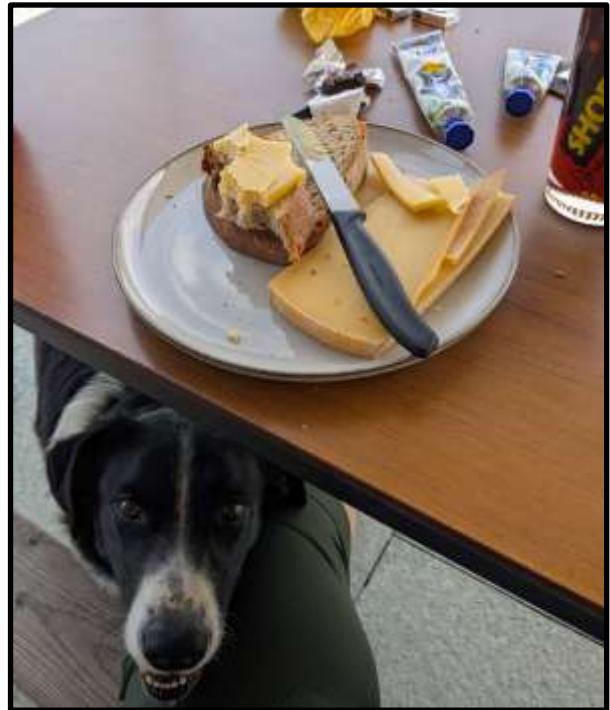


Day 2: Sunday June 15th

I felt a lot better on the second day. I was on my bike by 6:30am and it was nice and cool. I also felt good cause we were starting to get into the higher/steeper mountains, which is the whole point of the Hope— the first day I felt kind of weird and anxious because I was anticipating the steep/long/high climbs, but the route was taking us through the “lowlands”.

There were many climbs on the second day, I climbed a total of 3,800m. I think a highlight was the almost ~1000m climb outside of the Walensee. This was the first big long steep climb— I was alone, felt quite good, and climbed in the rain for ~2.5h but somehow managed to descend on dry trails after having a nice lunch near some curious cows! The climb after was less fun, mostly because it was in the sun and very hot.

When I reached Einsiedeln it started to pour. Luckily it was warm rain, which I don't mind, so I put on a rain jacket and continued on. Turns out a lot of others decided to wait out the rain— this means I caught up to ~5 other folks in front of me. I did the beautiful descent into Schywz with 4 other guys. I managed to complete section 3 on day 2, which felt good. I was going to continue going for another hour or two, but the others informed me it was supposed to be a very stormy night, and they had an extra bed in the hostel they booked. I took them up on the offer and had another great sleep after a pasta dinner!





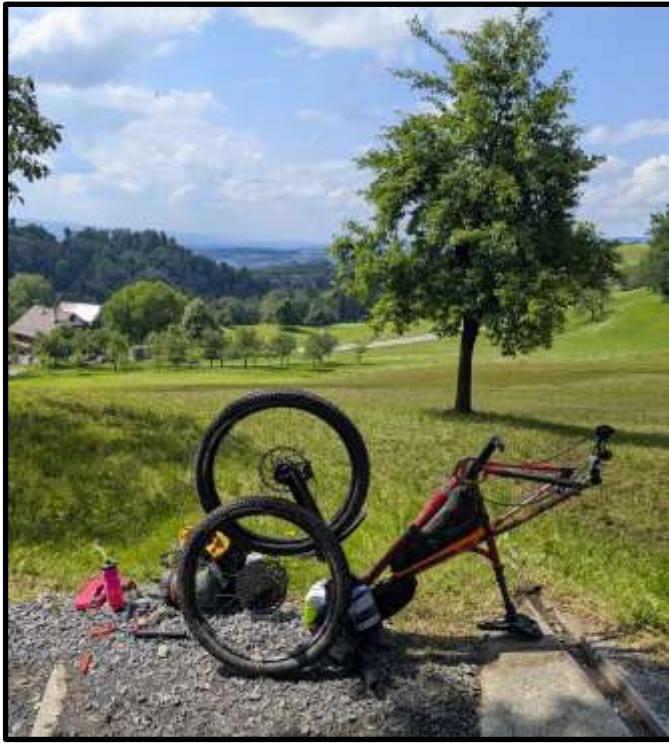
Day 3: Monday June 16th

My Day 3 had a lot less climbing than Day 2. There were two steep long climbs in the beginning, then nothing serious the rest of the day. This allowed me to cover a lot of ground– I rode a total of 159km.

I did the first steep climb alone, had a very fun descent, then stopped at a post office to ship ~2kg of stuff back to our apartment in Geneva! Since day 1 I had started to scheme about how to reduce the weight of my setup... I sent a number of things back— my rain pants, tarp, extra shoes, socks, etc. The stop took a while and I surely confused the Swiss Post employees in [Laurez](#), but it was SOOO worth it. The next climb I felt giddy knowing I was dragging 2kg less up 1000m (about 5 Wh in potential energy, for those curious). At the top of this long climb I stopped for some food with a few other riders. For the next few hours I rode at a leisurely pace with Christian and Tilman, two nice Germans who were doing the Hope.

Around 15:00 I got a nasty flat from some pokey thing. I couldn't fix the double puncture with the tubeless "bacon strips" and sealant, so I put a tube in it. I also stopped at a bike shop to pick up additional tubes. All this faffing about left me in quite the mood. I felt like I was behind, and there weren't any steep hills in front of me— as a result I went into "turbo mode" for a few hours, and went fast on the flatt-ish road and gravel paths (which is what I'm good at). I ended up catching like ~7 other riders and sped past them after a quick "hello", since I wasn't in a mood for chit-chat. I finally got tired around 20:00 and started looking for a spot to sleep. I found a nice field on the top of a hill near a little forest. Other than hearing a gunshot shortly after I arrived (the Swiss love their guns), it was very peaceful.





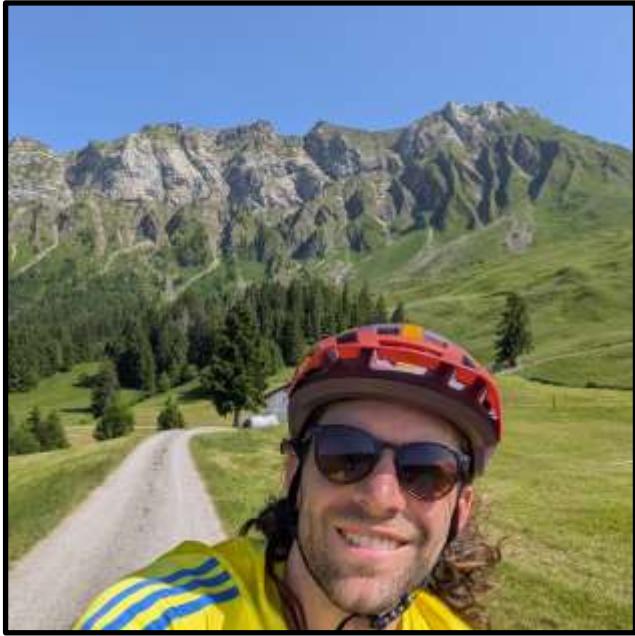
Day 4: Tuesday June 17th

Day 4 started with a long tough climb that involved a lot of hike-a-bike, including up some very steep stairs. I ran into Christian and Tilman again on the way up. Despite the good sleep I was feeling quite tired and slow this day... I was eager to get up higher to cooler temperatures (most of Day 3 was again in the “lowlands”). The immediate goal of today was to get to the depot at the halfway mark in Finsterwald (500/1000km). Willi and co organize a depot halfway where you can send yourself some stuff from the start. The depot is

located at the garage of a very nice friend of Willi's who allows sweaty cyclists to hang out, eat food, use the bathroom, and drink lots of water. My box had some spare clothes in it. I swapped out a shirt, sold the extra bike shorts to Tilman for a good deal (who was suffering from his lack of padded shorts 😊), and then sent the rest home to Geneva.

The rest of the day involved some big beautiful climbs, with mostly double-track/fire road descents. I decided I wanted to sleep at a higher elevation to stay cool, so after about 87km and a big climb I found a great sleeping spot on a little picnic table that was protected from curious cows and near a little stream. I did my washing, ate a bunch of random food (chips, fresh pretzels, cheese, a whole pack of oreos, nuts, etc.) and had another great sleep. Almost no bugs! I did wake up to the sound of foxes though— they make crazy sounds!

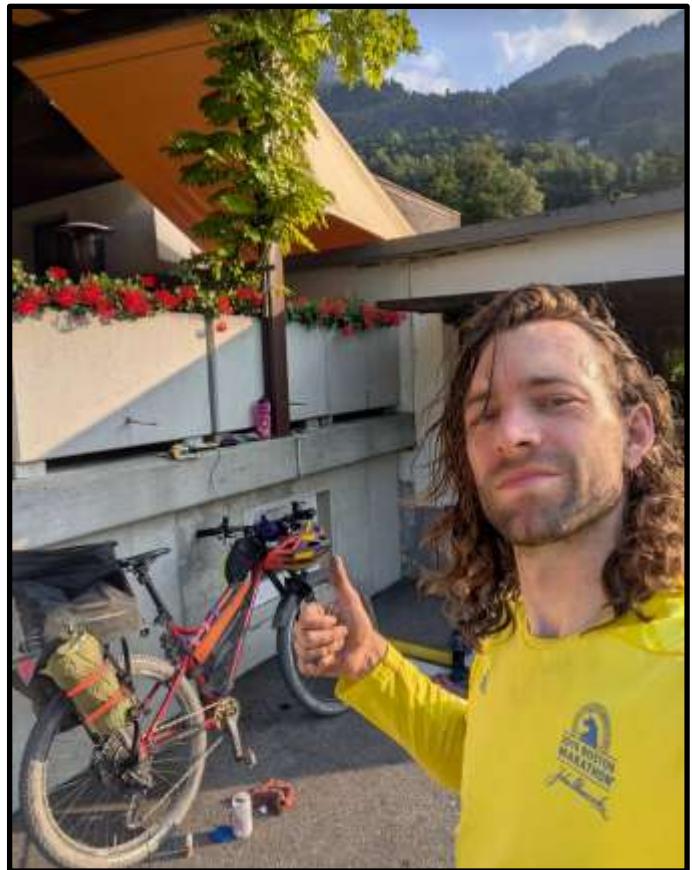




Day 5: Wednesday June 18th

Day 5 started with a nice descent into a small town. I found some breakfast at a [Volq](#) in Schangnau, then started a long climb that involved almost an hour of hike-a-bike due to how rocky and steep the ascent was (13%+). Mentally I had settled on a new approach—since day 2 or 3 I started to assume every significant climb involves long sections of hiking. When this wasn't true, I was pleasantly surprised, but otherwise it was OK since I was expecting it.

I was alone most of the day, which was fine by me. I started off in a good mood but the heat and fatigue steadily put me in a worse and worse mood. At around 17:00 I stupidly signed onto an important work meeting (some org changes at [Zipline](#)). I spent 45 minutes slowly biking, sweating, and getting angry about work. The meeting totally took my head out of my race, and put me in an exceptionally foul mood. Even though I hadn't made it too far that day I decided to find a [hotel](#) in Meiringen and try to sleep it off. I did laundry in the shower, ate a big (mediocre) pizza, drank a beer, and slept deeply.



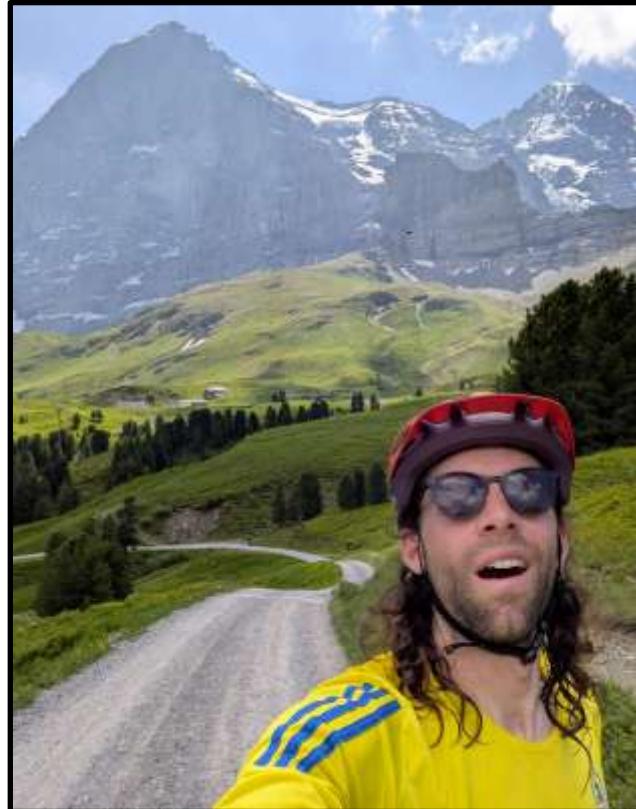
Day 6: Thursday June 19th

I managed to do three massive climbs on Day 6, and despite a slow start I felt great in the end. This is one of the hardest/longest days I've had on a bike!

Even though I got an early start leaving Meiringen I was sweating like 15 minutes into the ride due to the heat and steep roads. The ~1300m climb quickly became beautiful, as I was in the shadow of some MASSIVE peaks around the Eiger. I'm very happy I did this climb early with fresh legs... it took me a few hours. Descending into Grindelwald was fun, there were lots of tourists to zip by. After wetting my shirt in a fountain and filling up water, I promptly started the next climb over the saddle to Lauterburnnen. This climb was exposed and hot, but my legs felt strong and I was determined to put a lot of miles behind me. I stopped for a yummy sandwich, coffee, and pastry at the top of the second climb, which happened to be the [midway stop](#) of the [Jungfrau railway](#), the cog-train that goes up the Jungfraujoch (aka "Top of Europe"). It was funny to be here on my bike—Marta and I took the cog train in 2020. I felt much less like a tourist this time, and more like a weird sweaty biker who knows a few things about Switzerland!

After the second descent I did approximately ~30km of flat-ish riding nearby Interlaken to get to the base of the third (massive) climb. It was super hot, my bike computer read 40° C (104° F) at some point. I drenched my long sleeves and hair in every fountain I found. Finally at the start of the third climb I stopped at a wonderful little [off-grid restaurant](#) and chilled out for an hour—ate a huge salad, bread, drank a coke, had a huge icecream and chatted with Martin. Martin is very nice and was in good spirits, he's a pilot for Edelweiss and had ridden the Hope twice before. He only carried a backpack and stayed in hotels, and is the same age as my dad!

The third climb was possibly my favorite of the whole route. It was brutal and felt very remote, but was spectacular. I saw a number of animals: a baby bird walking along the road, a [Chamois](#), and a raptor struggling to gain altitude due to the stoat (or weasel) in its talons. The climb took a few hours and the descent was super fun—some intense single track. I stopped to try and help a fellow rider with a nasty tubeless flat (failed once again... I'm not sold on tubeless) on the descent then continued down into “Reichenbach im Kandertal” (quite a name). By now I was very tired and needed to find a place to sleep. I called ~4 hotels but they were all booked. I ended up aiming to camp at a parking lot by the airport (pilots usually aren't too fussed) but ended up sleeping in a [small park](#) nearby. When I arrived past 22:00 there was a friendly folk-dancing group having a BBQ around a fire—I asked them if I could sleep around here and almost all of them said no, I should go ~10km to a camping area in the next town. Luckily one “mountain” guy said absolutely I could sleep on a picnic table for a night... no one would mind. He told the others that it was fine, then they gave me some yummy sausages and a shot of something. I slept well, and was pleased with how my body felt after such a long day of climbing!







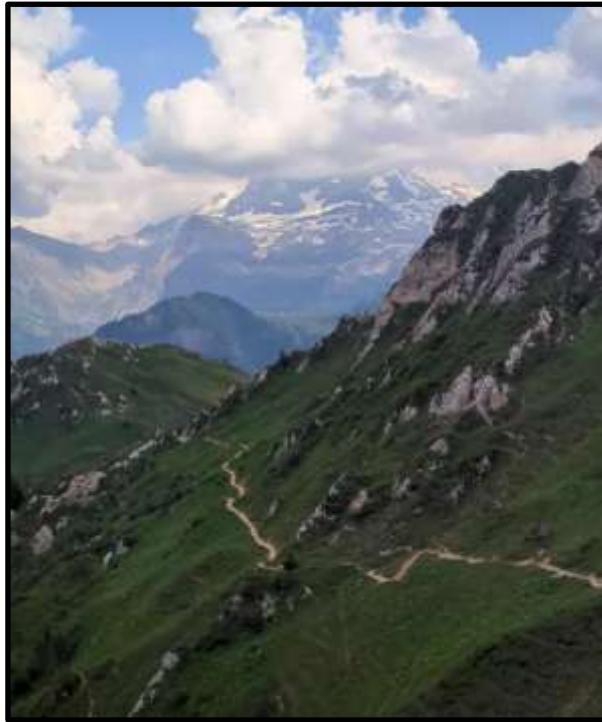
Day 7: Friday June 20th

Another hot day. I was feeling pretty tired on all three of the climbs after my super long Day 6. The first climb was long and just kept getting steeper. I stopped for a nice tart near the top. The descent involved some GREAT singletrack, but descending 900m of steep singletrack is not exactly relaxing 😅... at various points over the race my arms and abs were sore from intense descents.

The climb out of Lenk was exceptionally hot and long... I got quite overheated and had to stop for a snack in the shade on the way up. This one also involved over an hour of hike-a-bike, so a climb that I thought would take 2.5h took me almost 4h. The top was stunning though, with some unique geology (very pokey raw rocks). Unfortunately the singletrack at the very top was mostly unrideable, as it was a hiking path that snaked through the exposed rocks. Once I was on the top ridge it started to look stormy and I heard some thunder, so I started descending as fast as I could to get off the ridgeline. This was a bit scary, and I'm proud of myself for not crashing!

The final climb also involved some hiking and left me utterly exhausted. In the morning (at the park) I had booked a hostel in Saanen and was dead-set on getting there to eat as much as I could and sleep hard. By the time I made it to Saanen my legs were shattered. Luckily I had a four-person shared hostel room to myself, so I could take up space with my laundry and sleep unbothered.





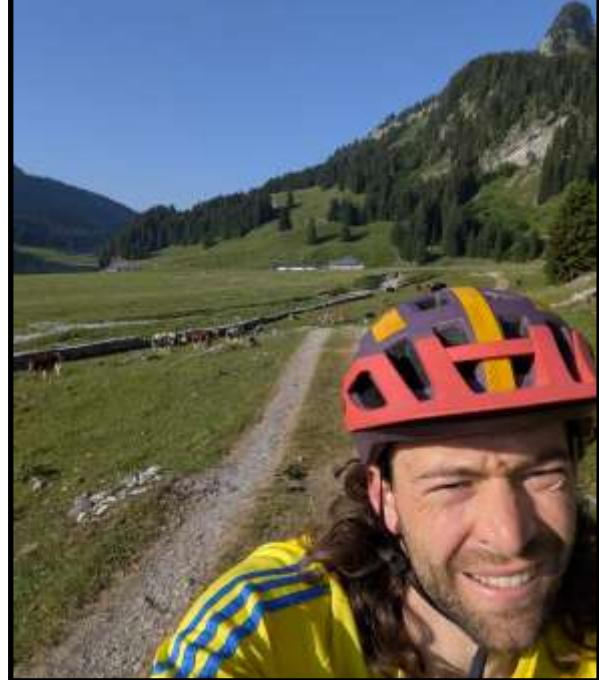
Day 8: Saturday June 21st

This day started off beautifully. I was amazed at how much my legs had recovered in one night, and I felt good and not too hot for the first couple climbs! The route took us through some less populated areas, on some excellent paths (although some were up to 23% grade, and required hiking as always!).

I did not like the last 30 km of this day. I was tired, hot, and we were just “bopping around Gruyères” wiggling around up and down silly little hills for no real reason. I was also on a mission—Marta and Luna were driving from Geneva to come camp with me! After much searching, we decided to camp in the parking

lot of a lovely little [buvette](#). The lady who runs it was so sweet, after staying open late to accommodate us, she left us the key to the toilet! It was a first rate camp spot, for free!

It was so lovely to see Marta and Luna, but it was quite tough to leave them the next morning... after over a week of biking my brain and body wanted to be done!





Day 9: Sunday June 22

After a deep sleep, I woke up early and had to leave my two cozy ladies in the tent. This was tough, but I was motivated to finish! The last section involves two big climbs, with some beautiful remote trails. It helped that I knew this section from my test ride in April. Overall it felt easier this time— partly because I already knew it, partly because I could smell the finish, and maybe because I had become an expert mountain biker after a solid week of training!

Both the passes were beautiful, and didn't require too much hiking. The descents were fun and fast. I didn't stop too much, and finished the final 60km in about 5 hours. Marta, Luna, and Armando (Marta's dad, my father-in-law) all met me at the Freddie Mercury statue in Montreux, the finish of the Hope 1000! I felt surprisingly fresh and good on this last section. The finish was fun— I arrived around noon and there were a few other riders there, some who finished a bit after me and some who had finished the day before but stayed in Montreux. We compared notes and appreciated being off our bikes!





Final Thoughts

The Hope 1000 was a fantastic experience. The route is a masterpiece— very few cars and tons of amazing climbs. I felt and did better than expected— my lower back issues (from my motorcycle crash in August 2020) that usually prevent me from sitting on a bike for too long didn't really affect me! I think this was largely due to the constant changing position of mountain biking. Going up, hiking, descending all use different muscles and require me to change position.

This year Benjamin Maibach (nice guy from Lausanne) set the new fastest time for the route— 3 days, 11 hours, 34 minutes. This is mindblowing, but even more interesting to see how he did it. It all comes down to hours on the bike. In those 3.5 days Benjamin spent ~87% of his time riding his bike... with only ~10h off the bike 😱. In total he spent ~72h riding while I spent 81h. Our absolute speed wasn't so different (he was ~13% faster than me) but I spent an extra 4 days (almost 100h) resting 😅 over the 8 days and 5 hours it took me.

If I did it again, I would make these changes:

- Spend more hours in the saddle prior to the ride (my butt hurt a lot, and that can be cured by getting it used to the bike seat prior...)
- Ride with a lighter setup— I would take less rain gear, and minimal camping stuff. Bugs weren't really an issue, and with MeteoSwiss (weather app) you are unlikely to be totally surprised by bad weather. There are tons of places to take shelter along the route, and the altitude is not so extreme (highest point is under 2100m). I wouldn't take spare shoes or as many clothes, and just commit to being smelly like most of the other riders.
- Ride with tubes from the start. Tubeless makes such a mess, can't solve big problems, and there are almost no thorns in Switzerland. I also have soooooo many years experience fixing flats on tubes that I'm quite fast at it.
- Continue the strategy I developed after the first few days: don't stop at the bottom. Most of the time I would minimize the time I spent in the town at the base of climbs. Eating a big meal before a big climb is both physically and mentally challenging... most of the climbs have some sort of restaurant or cafe at the top, and it's great to digest during the descent.
- Be a bit more active about booking places when I don't want to camp. It seemed like a good strategy to book something in the AM after riding a bit and decided how good you feel.
- Carry everything on the bike, not on my back. I got really sweaty the first two days wearing a hip-pack, and felt much better after I sent this home.
- I think I could try to shave off a day or two of my time, but I like (and need) sleep too much to ever be "competitive" in a race like this, and I'm okay with that!

Thanks for following along, and reading this verbose report!

Eric