

The blind leading the blind
Ade Hill, Haute Route Lanterne Rouge

Going into my first Haute Route as a Lanterne Rouge in 2015 I wasn't really sure what to expect, I'd ridden a number of Sportives before as well as two Haute Route events and led AlpCycles clients through the mountains but never taken on a role like this on an event. I have to admit, my first big surprise even before the start of the first stage was how big my arse looked in the red shorts of the Lanterne Rouge.

My week got off to a less-than-ideal start as I twisted my back lifting my Haute Route travel bag down the stairs in the hotel and awoke an old injury. I didn't want to let anyone down though so I got on my bike and cracked on with it.

Winding through the back streets of Nice on the way to the start line I quickly got disoriented and began to worry as I wasn't entirely sure where the start line was and seemed to be riding in circles, stopping at the same stop lights several times, unable to find the seafront and start line on the Promenade des Anglais.

After a few minutes, a couple other riders looking for the start line jumped on my wheel and began following me, thinking that since I had the Lanterne Rouge kit on I must know where I was going. Little did they know I would be of no help! Fast forward another five minutes, and I'd got myself a

fully-fledged peloton of about 30 riders following me through the old town of Nice, thinking I was taking them to the start line.

Thankfully, I found the seafront eventually and spotted the start line in the distance. Pointing confidently towards the start line I bellowed "There's the start line everyone" to the nervous group of riders behind me, ensuring in the process that the illusion that I'd known where I was going all along remained intact.

Once I'd made it to the start line the nerves subsided and the buzz was real as everyone was excited to get the event underway. A few riders asked me for a picture, and admitted with a laugh that they hoped never to see me again throughout the week. I can't blame them, no one plans to be near the back.

It has taken me a few years to fill Fergus' boots as the Lanterne Rouge, but after four years and eight Haute Route events ridden I feel I am properly part of the family now. Every year I look forward to jumping back on the bike in the red kit with friends old and new from far and wide to enjoy the Haute Route together.

Ride safe everyone, and remember not to try following me to any start lines. I'm used to bringing up the rear, not leading the group.

Ade

