

## Driving to Résidence Laforêt from Calais/Boulogne Shopping *en route* & on return journey. Departing and getting onto the Autoroute at Riddes

See also website «[www.laforet35.ch](http://www.laforet35.ch)»

*Disclaimer: This document is intended as informative only. The reader is solely responsible for judging the driving abilities, preferences, vehicle capability etc. for their journey. Roads and route details may change subsequent to publication. All liability for accuracy is disclaimed.*

The nominal drive time to la Tzoumaz from Calais is 8½ hours excluding breaks. This assumes reasonable weather and the use of motorways for the majority of the journey. There are essentially two routes, either all-motorway, or a more direct one that uses A-Roads for the middle part of the journey.

You *must* have a **Swiss Motorway Vignette** displayed on the windscreen (CHF 40) if you use the Swiss Autoroutes. A Vignette can be obtained in advance from the Swiss Travel Centre in London ([www.stc.co.uk](http://www.stc.co.uk)), at the border, or at most motorway petrol stations. The police are very hot on picking up drivers without a vignette. Without it, using only minor roads will add over 2 hours to your journey.

### French Autoroute Toll Tag

We rent a French **SANEF** motorway screen tag which allows us to drive straight through the reserved 'T' lanes on French Autoroutes. Tolls are debited from our UK bank account. See <https://www.sanefolling.co.uk/?gclid=CMvs-7HOtbwCFYcSwwodBh8ANA>

Note the comments on winter tyres and chains at the end of the document. A more detailed guide to winter tyres is available.

### The Route

There are four segments to the journey

1. Calais to Dijon (Autoroute)
2. Dijon to Lausanne – Various Choices of Route
3. Lausanne to Riddes (Autoroute)
4. Final climb from Riddes up to La Tzoumaz (13kms) 'B' Road

These are the main [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) route planner options for Eurotunnel Coquelles to La Tzoumaz 1918. Viamichelin can also calculate tolls and fuel for your car category.

The most likely places you'll encounter snow is on the Jura Mountain route (where the road ascends to 1100m) and again, as you approach the village at 1500m. Average drive time is around 1hr per 100Kms.

There is a separate simplified map of the final part of the route from Geneva, via Lausanne and Martigny to Riddes, where you exit the autoroute and climb up to the village.

### Section#1 Calais to Dijon (490 Kms) - All Autoroute

Calais → Arras → Reims → Châlons-en-Champagne → Troyes → Dijon

The recommended route from Calais is to Dijon (1) on the Autoroute des Anglais. If you plan an overnight stop, the half-way point by driving time is between Troyes and Dijon (see below).

### Section#2 Dijon to Lausanne

#### (2A) all-motorway: South, then East

Dijon → Mâcon → Bourg en Bresse → Geneva → Lausanne

#### (2B) Jura Mountains 1: SE via Besançon and Jura Mountains (A Roads)

Dijon → Besançon → Pontarlier\* → Lausanne

#### (2C) Jura Mountains 2: South via Champangole & Jura Mts. to Nyon (summit on B Road)

Dijon → Dole → Champangole → Morez → Nyon (on Lake Geneva) → Lausanne

After Dijon, you have a choice of either continuing along the all-motorway route (2A) via Mâcon and Geneva or going across country. The motorway route is longer, but a more steady drive. The elevated sections of the autoroute as you climb up to Geneva are quite impressive.

There are two cross-country routes: (2B) SE over the Jura Mountains via Besançon or (2C) South over the Jura Mountains to Nyon, on Lake Geneva (Lac Léman). These are more direct, but via 'A' roads across the summit of the Jura, which may be difficult or slow in snow.

Some satnavs will offer you different cross-country routes to 2B and 2C, but in our experience, while some of these are fine in the summer, they are less so in winter. Some route planners also offer a more northerly route via Berne, but these will involve either driving over the Bernese mountains at altitude, or using a roll-on/roll-off train transporter through them.

### Section#3: Final Autoroute (80 mins / 80 Kms) around Lake Geneva to Rhône Valley

Lausanne → Montreux → Martigny → Riddes

### Section 4: Riddes up to La Tzoumaz (13kms)

The final stage of your drive is to exit the Autoroute between Martigny and Brig at Junction 24 of the A9-E62 autoroute, the exit for Riddes. From Riddes, you drive the 13Kms and 700 vertical metres up to La Tzoumaz.

## Overnight Stop: Le Val Moret (nr. Troyes), Besançon & Pontarlier

If you have already driven a fair way in the UK just to get to the Eurotunnel or ferries, then I'd recommend a half-way-ish stop at Magnant near **Troyes** at *Le Val Moret* - this is a three-star Logis de France motel in the Champagne region, with a good but unpretentious restaurant, and secure parking outside the rooms. It's roughly 4 hours from Calais, and just a five-minute drive off Junction 22 on Autoroute 5, just past Troyes. See [www.le-val-moret.com](http://www.le-val-moret.com)

If you prefer to make an overnight stay a bit further on, then **Besançon** is an attractive city with a good range of hotels in the centre, or the usual motel chains on the periphery. Downside is that if you stay in the old town, it can be a bit difficult to actually find the various hotels, and you may have to leave your car away from the hotel itself.

**Pontarlier** is another option for a cheap overnight stop at a Formule-1, Campanile, Ibis etc. – all of which are in the same zone on the N57 by-pass. They are fairly 'budget' but it's not a bad place to stop, as the next section of the route is over the Jura Mountains, which you may prefer to tackle in the daylight.

If you're shopping en route and staying overnight Saturday, bear in mind almost all French and Swiss supermarkets will be shut on a Sunday.

## Picking up Supplies en route

If you're self-catering or want to pick up some supplies en route to La Tzoumaz you have a number of options. There's nothing wrong with the La Tzoumaz supermarket – it has a wide range of products, and a baker and butcher in-store. However, if you have a large group that's self-catering then the grocery bill will be about 15% less if you buy in the valley.

TBH in the winter, we now tend to shop in the UK before we leave and not bother with a shop en route, or shop at a small supermarket like the one at Jougne just for essentials.

(Kms) is the distance from the Eurotunnel exit at Coquelles.

NOTE: La Tzoumaz doesn't have a petrol station, pharmacy or ATM – the village of Riddes at the base of the road up from the valley does have them: an Eni self-service station, a Reiffeisen Bank and ATM and a large pharmacy (see associated maps).

### *France*

If you are buying for other people not in the car, be aware that there are strict limits on meat imports to Switzerland based on a modest allowance per person in the vehicle. This is strictly enforced at the border, as is the check for a motorway vignette.

#### **Reims Champfleury – E.Leclerc (270 Kms)**

This is described in the return section. But you may consider shopping here if you're staying en route overnight Saturday and continuing Sunday, when French/Swiss supermarkets will be closed.

#### **Pontarlier – HyperU Superstore & Decathlon (671 Kms)**

The SuperU is a superstore just off the N57 Pontarlier by-pass, on a large retail estate and has a petrol station as well. There's also a Decathlon opposite, if you want to pick up any equipment or clothing at prices that will be a lot less than in resort.

#### **Jougne – ATAC (713 Kms)**

Jougne is a small town, en route from Pontarlier, not far from the border into Switzerland. It has a small ATAC supermarket right on the road. If all you want is a quick shop for ordinary supplies, it's quick and easy to park, but is big enough to have everything you'll want. It doesn't have a petrol station.

### *Switzerland*

#### **Allaman – Co-op Superstore (750 Kms)**

Between Geneva and Lausanne on the 1-E25-E62 at junction 14 (Allaman/Aubonne) just on the right is a large superstore that is part of a big retail complex. Parking is underground and access is easy. You'll need a CHF 2 coin for the trolley.

### Martigny – Migros Quartz Center

Just off junction 21 (Martigny-Fully) on the 9-E27-E62 (Avenue de Fully 63, 1920 Martigny) in the ‘**Migros** Quartz Center’ retail complex.

Next to the supermarket (which doesn’t sell alcohol) inside the building, there is a **Denner** outlet which usually has good prices (for CH) on beer and wine.

There is a BP garage opposite if you need to top-up with petrol/diesel before ascending the mountain. There’s no petrol station in La Tzoumaz.

### Riddes – Co Op

The final stage of your drive is to exit the Autoroute between Martigny and Brig at Junction 24 of the A9-E62 autoroute, the exit for Riddes. From Riddes, you drive the 13Kms and 1,000 vertical metres up to La Tzoumaz. It’s relatively small, but prices will be about 15% less than the Proxi supermarket in La Tzoumaz.



Note also that Riddes has a self-service petrol station (Eni), a bank and ATM (Raiffeisen) and a large Pharmacy – La Tzoumaz does not.



## Departure

On departure, if it has snowed overnight, you may encounter difficulties leaving the apartment block if you depart before 8am, as snow-clearing won't usually start until 7am and may not finish until 10am if falls have been heavy.



If you need to leave very early, then it's probably best to park your car in the village the night before: the public underground car park (next to the supermarket) is ideal, rather than out in the open. The village centre gets snow clearing as a priority, before they start on access roads to apartments and chalets.

At the time of writing (September 2020), the charge was around CHF 1 / hour and note: the machine only takes cash, not cards.

## Getting onto the Motorway at Riddes - T-Jct./Left/Brig/Lausanne

At the bottom of the road down to the valley, you'll drive round through vineyards & orchards to a 'T'-Junction next to a furniture store ('*Meubles*'). *Ignore all the white signposts to Martigny.*

**Turn left** and take the up-ramp signposted «**Brig**» onto the interchange. Do not go to Brig, but take the left lane to «**Lausanne**» (careful - cars from the right have priority on the down-ramp) and turn left onto the down-ramp to the autoroute.

## Bus, Télèpherique & Train

**Postbus from the Village:** Leaving by public transport is somewhat easier than arriving. The Postbus leaves from just outside the Télécabine station at 8, 9 and 10am most days. It then either drives directly down to the station in Riddes, or to the télèpherique in Isérables to which you transfer for the ride down to Riddes, and a short walk to the station.

**SBB Timetable Site:** Always check your bus /télèpherique /train itinerary on the SBB timetable website at [www.sbb.ch/en](http://www.sbb.ch/en) as the schedule can be different at Weekends and public holidays and certain school holidays. Occasional maintenance work can also mean schedule changes.

## Shopping in France en route

I'd recommend shopping either at Reims or closer to Calais at St.Quentin.



### Reims Champfleury A4 Jct.23 Épernay - E.Leclerc (270kms to Eurotunnel)

Champfleury is right beside the the Reims by-pass, just off junction 23 of the A4 autoroute. Typical massive superstore complex plus big petrol station, so add ½-hr at least for exiting, parking, refuelling and returning to autoroute, on top of shopping time.

If you are uncomfortable with doing your shop this far south (in case of delays on the Autoroute des Anglais) then consider St.Quentin is 180kms from Eurotunnel:

### St.Quentin Nord A26 Jct.17 – Auchan (180kms to Eurotunnel)

Exit the Autoroute at *Saint Quentin-Nord* on the E17/A26. There's an Auchan superstore that's just 5 minutes off the motorway:

Directions: A26 Jct.17 St.Quentin Nord



Travelling north to Calais on the E17/A26, exit at **Saint Quentin Nord** Jct.17. After about 500M bear right onto the N29 signposted St.Quentin for about 500M again, and at the first roundabout turn left and you should be in the car park.

On exiting the car park, keep to the right and you feed straight back onto the northbound E17/A26 Autoroute, signposted Laon/Reims, to Calais.

Remember that stores shut on Sundays.

## Tyres & Chains

If you drive to the Alps on standard-issue UK tyres then you need to have chains. Just bite the bullet and buy a set for your car and write it off as part of the holiday. But first, check in your owner's manual, or with your dealer, and ensure that your particular wheels can take chains. A lot of chain retailers rely on the likelihood that you'll either never use them or that they won't be there when the chains rip your steering, suspension and brake pipes to bits on a mountain hairpin.

There's a separate 'Guide to Winter Wheels and Tyres' available on request.

### The Problem

The problem with using snow chains can be (1) that many UK vehicles are fitted with low-profile wheels which simply won't take chains - they may foul the steering components, and/or suspension and (2) winter tyres are better for most normal Alpine road conditions.

Most Alpine residents never resort to the use of chains. They switch to winter tyres in the winter. These are usually good enough to cope with most conditions. In the UK, drivers are increasingly doing the same and winter tyres are far more readily available. Quality manufacturers like Audi and BMW have arrangements where they will switch and store wheels and tyres for free (if bought from them).

There are some types of snow chain that fix to the external wheel nuts, which have no inside ring. They are more expensive but don't present any issues with (lack of) available space behind the wheel. They're also much faster to fit.

### Hire Cars

In the winter, almost all cars hired from the Swiss side of Geneva Airport carry winter tyres. Be careful when booking through intermediaries that apparently cheap rates may conceal 'winterisation' charges (for winter tyres and chains). Always ask for chains (ideally book them ahead of arrival), as even with winter tyres, these may be needed to get out of the village after very heavy snow falls, or up icy slopes.

If it's a 4x4/SUV they probably won't supply chains because they won't fit. There's an argument that a standard saloon/estate/coupé with winter tyres and chains is better than a 4x4 without chains in ice or very difficult conditions.

### Fuel

Diesel fuel sold in mountain areas generally has additives to help with colder temperatures, so if you have a choice, you may prefer to defer filling-up until you get to Switzerland. There is no petrol station in the village, so make sure you have enough fuel to climb the 1,000 metres from the valley and get down again. Bear in mind that some of the French self-service filling stations can be fussy about non-French plastic. And that some Swiss outlets only take debit cards, not credit cards (although this is less common than it used to be).



There's a 24H self-service station in Riddes, just past the turn-off up the mountain, on the other side of the road to the 'meubles' shop.