

ZWIFT "CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES"

Here's a quick report on the circuit, following a vTdf Discovery Ride last night. The term 'ride' is used in the loosest sense, because as ever, it was a full-on race.

The 'ride' last night had 800+ in, but the categories were not visible to each other, so there were about 85+ in A Cat. It was 6 laps and 43km (approx. 7km per lap).

The event was tougher than expected mainly due to the length of the lap, speed and unexpected gradient changes. As Steve said, 'it looks flat on TV' but it isn't.

As you can see from the course profile, the rise to the Arc de Triomphe reaches 3.8% at the end, and although that sounds easy compared to the recently experienced Ventoux, it's drags on. If you want to attack on this section or 'take the Sprint', it's probably the section of the course that will give you most chance to break away.

Just before the top of the 3.8% gradient, it's worthwhile dropping a gear to give yourself more RPM before levelling off and swinging round the Arc. You will see on the side profile (in blue), that after the sprint, it continues to rise slightly.

The downhill away from the Arc is hugely welcome, and it helps recover from the effort leading up to the Arc. If you can maintain speed around the Arc, and then sit at 4th or 5th wheel in the downhill from 2.5-4km, you're laughing (and probably dribbling), but it does allow you to regain your lungs.

After the downhill, get ready for a turn to the right and a slight uphill before a turn to the left again, and a kilometre long straight. At the end of the straight, at around 5.2km, you'll see a big dip (under a bridge in the game). It's good for a quick rest, but it rises again quickly, so get ready to turn on the power to get out of it. If you time it right, dropping a gear again at the lowest point of the dip, means it's another place you can breakaway if you can keep a consistent power output up the small rise and maintain it for .5km or so.

Overall, this is a circuit where you absolutely want to be in a bunch. Getting caught between groups isn't nice - or as the French call it 'chasse patate' (riding between two groups - literally, "potato hunt"). If you find that happens, it's worth your while to slow up, get your breath and tag on to the next bunch coming through. They'll be moving fast, so you need to time it right and get into the middle of the bunch as soon as you can, to benefit from your surge, grab a few seconds of freewheel, and regain breath.

If you're on for 6 laps, get ready for a long event, at an hour plus. As with all Zwift races, it's a fast one out of the pen, but if you form or join a bunch that matches your tempo, it's good fast fun.

