CAAM 471/571: Traveling Salesman Project

Kevin Burleigh and Julio Ledesma

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1 Overview

1.1 Problem Statement

We were tasked to solve the Traveling Salesman Problem using the branch-andcut method, utilizing gurobi to solve only linear programming relaxations of integer programs.

Given a graph G=(N,E) with nodes N and edges E, and an associated cost c_e for each edge, the goal of the TSP is to find the least costly path which visits each node exactly once and returns to the starting node (a Hamiltonian cycle).

The TSP can be formulated as the following integer program:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{minimize} & \displaystyle \sum_{e \in E} c_e x_e \\ \\ \text{subject to} & \displaystyle \sum_{e \in \delta(\{n\})} x_e = 2, \quad \forall n \in N \\ \\ & \displaystyle \sum_{e \in \delta(S)} x_e \geq 2, \quad \forall S \subset N, S \neq \emptyset \\ \\ & x_e \in \{0,1\}, \quad \forall e \in E \end{array}$$

where x_e is a decision variable indicating whether or not the associated edge is part of the tour, and $\delta(S)$ is the set of edges in the cut of node set S. The first set of constraints in (1) ensures that each node is entered exactly once and then exited exactly once. This leaves open the possibility of subtours, which are eliminated by the second set of constraints.

1.2 Approach

The TSP can be solved by using the branch-and-cut variant of the branch-and-bound method.

Branch-and-bound divides a problem into subproblems, solves each subproblem, and then determines which, if any, of the subproblems could potentially yield a result which is better than the best-known result. Subproblems which cannot potentially yield improvements are discarded, leaving more time to investigate the other, more promising, subproblems.

In the case of an LP relaxation to an IP problem, branch-and-bound can be used to implement variable fixing, where some non-integral x_e is forced to take on an integral value. In the case of the TSP, variable fixing results in one non-integral solution being turned into two subproblems, one for $x_e=0$ and one for $x_e=1$.

Branch-and-cut works similarly to branch-and-bound, but helps to avoid the potentially exponental growth in the number of subproblems. It does this by adding constraints (cuts) to models with non-integral x_e and reoptimizing them instead of automatically branching. If no new cuts can be found, branch-and-cut will degrade to normal branch-and-bound.

Our solver consists of three main parts, which will be desribed in the following sections:

- 1. a solver which manages branch-and-cut related activities
- 2. a graph class implements graph-related algorithms
- 3. a collection of cut generating algorithms

2 Solver

2.1 Top-Level Solver

The top-level solver creates the initial LP relaxation model and adds it to the model pool.

Until the pool is empty, it pulls a model from the pool, processes it, and adds any resulting models into the pool.

Processing ends when the model pool is empty.

(Note that code in listings may have been modified cosmetically for display purposes. Refer to the accompanying source for full details.)

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
    def solve(self):
        initial_model = self.create_initial_model()
        self.add_model_to_pool(model=initial_model, obj_lb=-float('inf'))

    while not self.model_pool_is_empty():
        model = self.remove_next_model_from_pool()

    for obj_lb,new_model in self.process_model(model):
        self.add_model_to_pool(model=new_model, obj_lb=obj_lb)
```

2.2 The Initial Model

The initial LP relaxation of (1) is:

minimize
$$\sum_{e \in E} c_e x_e$$
subject to
$$\sum_{e \in \delta(\{n\})} x_e = 2, \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{N}$$

$$0 \le x_e \le 1, \quad \forall e \in E$$

$$(2)$$

where the decision variables x_e are now allowed to take any value between zero and one, and the subtour constraints have been removed (they will gradually be re-introduced as the algorithm progresses).

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
    def create_initial_model(self):
        model = grb.Model('tsp')
        xx = model.addVars(self.edges,
            lb = 0.0,
            ub = 1.0,
            vtype = grb.GRB.CONTINUOUS,
            name = 'xx',
            obj = self.cost_by_edge
    )
    degree_constrs = model.addConstrs(
        (xx.sum(node,'*') + xx.sum('*',node) == 2.0 for node in
            self.nodes),
    'degree'
```

```
model.update()
return model
```

2.3 Model Processing

Models are processed using a variation of the branch-and-bound technique called branch-and-cut.

Once a model has been pulled from the model pool, it is optimized using gurobi.

If the model is infeasible, or if it cannot possibly yield a new best tour because its LP relaxation lower bound is greater than the current best tour cost, it is discarded (the 'bound' part of branch-and-cut) and processing stops.

If the current solution is a valid tour (and therefore integral) with a cost less than that of the current best tour, the current solution becomes the new best tour and processing stops.

Otherwise the current solution is either non-integral or not a tour, so, if possible, new constraints are added to the model (the 'cut' part of branch-and-cut) and it is re-optimized. If no cuts could be added, new variable fixing models (where some non-integral x_e is forced to take on a value of 0 or 1) are created and returned to the caller (the 'branch' part of branch-and-cut).

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
    def process_model(self, model):
        new_model_info = []
    while True:
        model.update()
        model.optimize()

    if self.solution_is_infeasible(model):
        break

    if not self.solution_can_become_new_best(model):
        break

    if self.solution_is_tour(model):
        if self.solution_is_new_best(model):
        self.update_best(model)
        break
```

2.4 Adding Cuts (Constraints)

Several algorithms were developed for finding violated constraints and adding them to models. These algorithms are called sequentially, and once a new constraint is added, the model updated and re-optimized.

Details of the constraint-generating algorithms can be found in section 4.

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
    def add_cuts_to_model(self, model):
        constraints_were_added = False

    if self.add_comb_constraints(model):
        constraints_were_added = True
    elif self.add_integral_subtour_constraints(model):
        constraints_were_added = True
    elif self.add_nonintegral_subtour_constraints(model):
        constraints_were_added = True
    elif self.add_objective_constraints(model):
        constraints_were_added = True

# elif self.add_gomory_constraints(model):
# constraints_were_added = True

return constraints_were_added = True
```

2.5 Variable Fixing (Branching)

Variable fixing (branching) is implemented by finding the first non-integral solution variable x_e and creating two new models: one forcing x_e to take on

exactly 0, and one forcing x_e to take on exactly 1. The newly-created models are then returned to the caller, where they will be added to the model pool for further processing.

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
   def create_branch_models(self, model):
       best_idx = best_var = best_val = None
       for idx,mvar in enumerate(model.getVars()):
           val = mvar.getAttr('X')
           if abs(val - int(val)) != 0.0:
              if (best_val is None) or (abs(val - 0.5) < best_val):</pre>
                  best_val = abs(val - 0.5)
                  best_var = mvar
                  best_idx = idx
       model1 = grb.Model.copy(model)
       m1var = model1.getVarByName(best_var.getAttr('VarName'))
       model1.addConstr(m1var == 0.0)
       model1.update()
       model2 = grb.Model.copy(model)
       m2var = model2.getVarByName(best_var.getAttr('VarName'))
       model2.addConstr(m2var == 1.0)
       model2.update()
       return (model1, model2)
```

3 Graph Class

3.1 Tour Detection

Tours are detected by (a) verifying that $x_e \in \{0, 1\} \forall e \in E$, (b) ensuring that every node has a degree of two, and (c) ensuring that there is only one connected component (no subtours).

```
## graph.py
class Graph(object)
  def is_tour(self, solution):
     ##
     ## Check that the solution is a "binary" vector,
     ## and that number of selected edges is the same as
```

```
## the number of nodes
num_selected_edges = 0
for idx,value in enumerate(solution):
   if not value in [0.0,1.0]:
       return False
   if value == 1.0:
       num_selected_edges += 1
if num_selected_edges != len(self.nodes):
   return False
## Form a mapping from a node to nodes connected
## by selected edges, and ensure that each node
## has degree 2.
selected_edges_by_node = {node: set() for node in self.nodes}
for idx,value in enumerate(solution):
   if value == 1.0:
       edge = self.edge_by_idx[idx]
       (node1,node2) = edge
       selected_edges_by_node[node1].add(edge)
       selected_edges_by_node[node2].add(edge)
for node,selected_edges in selected_edges_by_node.items():
   if len(selected_edges) != 2:
       return False
## Find all connected components. If there is only one,
## we have a tour.
##
node_components, edge_components =
    self.binary_connected_components(solution)
if len(node_components) != 1:
   return False
return True
```

3.2 Connected Components

Connected components can be detected by doing a breadth-first search of previously-unseen nodes. When no unseen nodes can be reached, all seen nodes form a connected component. Nodes in the current connected component can be removed from the graph, and the process repeated, until every node belongs to a connected component.

In our implementation, we return connected components in both node and edge forms.

```
## graph.py
class Graph(object)
   def connected_components(self):
       connected_components_nodes = []
       connected_components_edges = []
       unvisited_nodes = set(self.nodes)
       while len(unvisited_nodes) != 0:
           queue = deque([unvisited_nodes.pop()])
           visited_nodes = set()
           visited_edges = set()
           while len(queue) != 0:
              cur_node = queue.popleft()
              if cur_node in unvisited_nodes:
                  unvisited_nodes.remove(cur_node)
              visited_nodes.add(cur_node)
              for edge in self.edges_by_node[cur_node]:
                  visited_edges.add(edge)
                  (node1, node2) = edge
                  if node1 not in visited_nodes:
                      queue.append(node1)
                  if node2 not in visited_nodes:
                      queue.append(node2)
           connected_components_nodes.append(visited_nodes)
           connected_components_edges.append(visited_edges)
       return connected_components_nodes, connected_components_edges
```

3.3 Min-Cut

The Stoer-Wagner[1] algorithm is used to find min-cuts in a graph. The algorithm works by repeatedly removing the "least attached" node (based on its cut) from the current graph by merging it with the next "least attached" node. When all nodes have been merged, the smallest encountered cut is the min-cut for the graph.

In our variation of this algorithm, we accumulate all encountered cuts so that they can be processed using whatever cut threshold the caller wants.

```
## graph.py
class Graph(object)
   def find_min_cut(self):
       merged_graph = Graph(nodes=self.nodes, edges=self.edges,
           weight_by_edge=self.weight_by_edge)
       min_cut_value = float("inf")
       min_cut_nodes = []
       all_cuts = []
       while merged_graph.num_nodes > 1:
           penultimate_node = None
           last_node
               merged_graph.nodes[random.randint(0,len(merged_graph.nodes)-1)]
           node_set = set([last_node])
          while True:
              new_node =
                  merged_graph._find_next_connected_node(target_nodes=node_set)
              if new_node is None:
                  break
              penultimate_node = last_node
              last_node
                             = new_node
              node_set.add(new_node)
           current_cut_value = 0
           current_cut_nodes = [last_node]
           for other_node in merged_graph.nodes_by_node[last_node]:
              current_cut_value +=
                   merged_graph.weight_by_edge[(last_node, other_node)]
           merged_graph =
               merged_graph._merge_nodes(node1=penultimate_node,
               node2=last_node)
```

4 Constraint (Cut) Algorithms

4.1 Subtour

The subtour constraints in the original TSP IP formulation (1) cannot be enumerated in practice for large TSP problems, which is why they are dropped in the initial LP relaxation (2).

Given a solution x^* to an LP relaxation, it is possible to find and re-apply a violated subtour constraint by examining min-cuts on the resulting graph: if the min-cut is less than two, then some subtour contraint has been violated. By dividing the nodes into two subsets $(S \text{ and } N \setminus S)$ as determined by the edges in the min-cut, the following constraint can be constructed:

$$\sum_{e \in S} x_e \ge 2 \tag{3}$$

Two algorithms were developed to find cuts based on this property: One works for binary \boldsymbol{x}^* and the other works for any \boldsymbol{x}^* . Both utilize the same underlying graph ultilities.

Subtour contraints are universal: they apply to any TSP model regardless of what other decisions (e.g., variable fixing) might have been made. As a result, when a subtour constraint is found, it is added to *all* models (not just the current model). This avoids searching for the identical constraint multiple times.

4.1.1 Integral

If \mathbf{x}^* is binary $(x_e \in \{0,1\} \forall e \in E)$ then finding a min-cut is the same as finding a cut for some connected component (assuming there is more than one). This cut will obviously have value zero (since \mathbf{x}^* is binary), which is below the subtour constraint threshold of two.

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
   def add_integral_subtour_constraints(self, model):
       graph, xx = self.convert_model(model)
       connected_component_nodes, connected_component_edges =
           graph.binary_connected_components(solution=xx)
       if len(connected_component_nodes) == 1:
           return False
       for cur_model in all_models:
           mvars = cur_model.getVars()
           for cc in connected_component_nodes:
              ## translate the edge indices into model variables
              cut_edges = graph.get_cut_edges(nodes=cc)
              var_idxs = sorted([self.idx_by_edge[edge] for edge in
                  cut_edges])
              cvars = [mvars[idx] for idx in var_idxs]
              coeffs = [1.0 for idx in var_idxs]
              cur_model.addConstr(grb.quicksum(cvars) >= 2.0,
                   'subtour-integral')
              constraints_were_added = True
       return constraints_were_added
```

4.1.2 Non-Integral

Instead of using connected components like the integral approach, this algorithm looks for any min-cut whose value is less than two. In fact, it accumulates all of the violated subtour constraints it encounters for the given solution.

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
```

```
def add_nonintegral_subtour_constraints(self, model):
   graph, xx = self.convert_model(model)
   modified_graph, xx = self.convert_model(model)
   all_cuts = []
   while still_adding_new_cuts:
       cur_cuts = modified_graph.find_min_cut()
       all_cuts.extend(cur_cuts)
       if cur_cuts[0][0] > 0.0:
           break
       new_nodes = set(modified_graph.nodes) - set(cur_cuts[0][1])
       new_edges = set()
       new_weights = {}
       for node in new_nodes:
          for edge in modified_graph.edges_by_node[node]:
              if (edge[0] in new_nodes) and (edge[1] in new_nodes):
                  new_edges.add(edge)
                  new_weights[edge] =
                      modified_graph.weight_by_edge[edge]
       modified_graph = Graph(nodes=new_nodes, edges=new_edges,
           weight_by_edge=new_weights)
   all_cuts = sorted(all_cuts, key=lambda x: x[0])
   if len(all_cuts) == 0:
       return False
   if all_cuts[0][0] >= 2.0:
       return False
   for cur_model in all_models:
       for var_idxs in non_dup_cuts:
           add_constr_to_model(model=cur_model, var_idxs=var_idxs)
   return constraints_were_added
```

4.2 Comb (Blossom) Inequalities

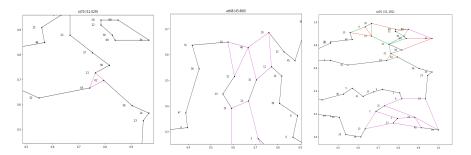
Given an optimal tour on G = (N, E), it can be shown that, for some 'handle' node set $H \subset N$ and 'tooth' edges $\{T_1, \ldots, T_k\} = \delta(H)$, that:

$$\sum_{e \in \delta(H)} x_e + \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{e \in \delta(T_i)} x_e \ge 3k + 1 \tag{4}$$

if k is odd.

Equation (4) is called the *comb inequality* and can be used to find subtour constraint violations.

The code is too involved to show here, but details can be found in [2],[3]. The following figures show combs found during the processing of datasets for this project.



4.3 Objective

In our particular flavor of the TSP, all edge costs c_e are integral. This implies that the objective value of a valid TSP tour must also be integral because all x_e decision variables must be integral.

This makes it possible to create a new constraint whenever the LP relaxation objective value is non-integral by just rounding it up:

$$\sum_{e \in E} c_e x_e > = \left[\sum_{e \in E} c_e x_e^* \right] \tag{5}$$

where x_e^* are the current LP relaxation decision variables.

It turns out that gurobi allows constraints to be modified, so only one objective constraint is ever present at any given time. Also, because this constraint relies on locally-made decisions (like variable fixing), it is applied to the current model only. Some precautions were taken to avoid applying this constraint inappropriately due to floating-point rounding issues.

```
## tsp_solver.py
class TspBranchAndCut(object):
    def add_objective_constraints(self, model):
        obj_val = model.getAttr('ObjVal')
        ceil_obj_val = math.ceil(obj_val)
        floor_obj_val = math.floor(obj_val)

if (abs(obj_val - floor_obj_val) < 1e-6) or (abs(obj_val - ceil_obj_val) < 1e-6):</pre>
```

```
return False
target_constr_name = 'objective-roundup'
target_constr = None
for constr in model.getConstrs():
   if constr.getAttr('ConstrName') == target_constr_name:
       target_constr = constr
       break
if target_constr is not None:
   target_constr.setAttr('RHS', ceil_obj_val)
   mvars = model.getVars()
   var_idxs = sorted([self.idx_by_edge[edge] for edge in
       self.edges])
   cvars = [mvars[idx].getAttr('Obj')*mvars[idx] for idx in
       var_idxs]
   model.addConstr(grb.quicksum(cvars) >= ceil_obj_val,
        'objective-roundup')
return True
```

4.4 Gomory

Gomory mixed-integer constraints can be generated from the final tableau that results from the simplex algorithm.

We chose to implement these constraints based on [4], partly because the derivation was rather clear and partly because it deals with the case of general lower- and upper-bounds on variables.

The code worked fine on all datasets except pr76, where it resulted in a sub-optimal tour. This was possibly due to accumulation of rounding errors, but steps were taken to mitigate that problem proved ineffective.

The code is included in our project, but was disabled for the final runs.

5 Results

The algorithms outlined above were able to solve all assigned TSP datasets.

dataset	time (sec)	optimal tour cost
att48	0.84	10628
berlin22	0.06	7542
gr21	0.01	2707
hk48	0.49	11461
pr76	4263.32	108159
st70	4.24	675
ulysses22	0.04	7013

Images and details of each tour can be found in section 7.

6 Future Improvements

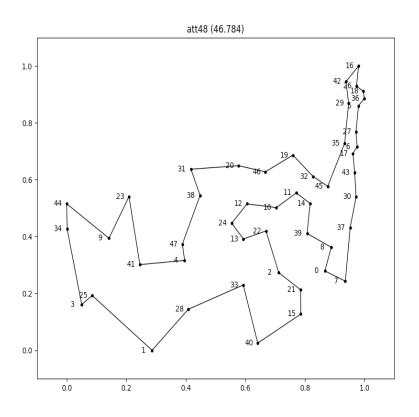
Clearly there is room for improvement on dataset pr76.

We performed an analysis to determine whether or not using the Held-Karp algorithm could drive models toward the optimum value more quickly, but the Held-Karp bounds on these datasets were not particularly close to the optima.

We also implemented Gomory mixed-integer cuts, which were very successful on all datasets except pr76, which we suspect might be due to the accumulation of rounding errors. The Gomory cuts could solve all other datasets even with all other constraints removed (except, of course, integral subtour detection) quite quickly (on the order of a few seconds at most). The code for these cuts is included, though it was disabled for these runs. Using purely integer-based cuts might work better for this type of problem.

7 Result Details

7.1 att48



0 7 178

7 37 312

37 30 183

30 43 139

43 17 112

17 6 54

6 27 85

27 5 153

5 36 66

36 18 42

18 26 64

26 16 117

16 42 139

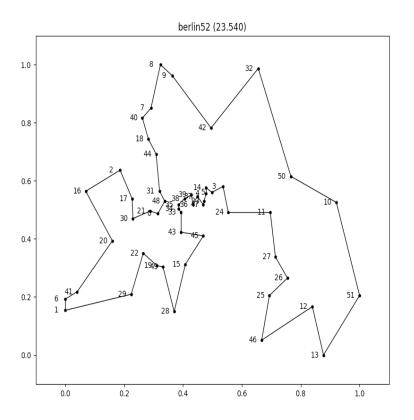
42 29 127

29 35 233

35 45 286

```
45 32 134
32 19 207
19 46 246
46 20 225
20 31 393
31 38 169
38 47 317
47 4 97
4 41 370
41 23 403
23 9 292
9 44 401
44 34 146
34 3 451
3 25 102
25 1 585
1 28 381
28 33 474
33 40 356
40 15 393
15 21 140
21 2 207
2 22 262
22 13 192
13 24 133
24 12 169
12 10 242
10 11 186
11 14 129
14 39 175
39 8 214
8 0 147
The cost of the best tour is: 10628.0
```

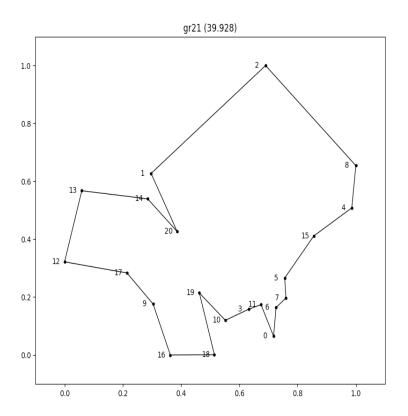
7.2 berlin52



- 21 46
- 21 30 104
- 17 80
- 2 135
- 16 217
- 16 20 253
- 20 41 290
- 41 6 76
- 1 45
- 29 390 29 22 179
- 22 19 94
- 19 49 35
- 49 28 191 28 15 201
- 45 156
- 43 131
- 43 33 80
- 33 34 21

```
34 35 15
35 38 43
38 39 43
39 36 41
36 37 43
37 47 49
47 23 16
23 4 32
4 14 25
14 5 40
5 3 70
3 24 109
24 11 245
11 27 182
27 26 110
26 25 126
25 46 186
46 12 324
12 13 206
13 51 319
51 10 399
10 50 285
50 32 475
32 42 365
42 9 308
9 8 83
8 7 183
7 40 64
40 18 92
18 44 75
44 31 151
31 48 50
48 0 64
The cost of the best tour is: 7542.0
```

$7.3 \quad gr21$

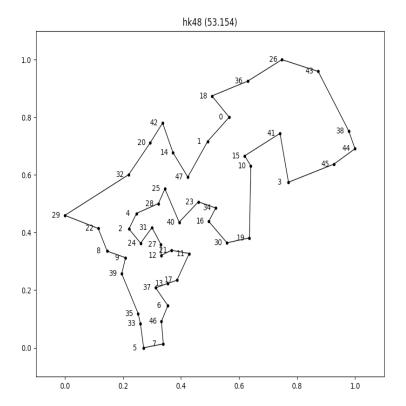


```
0
   6
      110
6
   7
      29
7
   5
      36
   15 125
15
      125
      120
   2
      295
      355
   20 140
  14 105
  13 170
  12 190
12 17 180
17 9
      77
   16 150
16 18 87
18 19 155
19 10 100
10 3 63
```

3 11 27 11 0 68

The cost of the best tour is: 2707.0

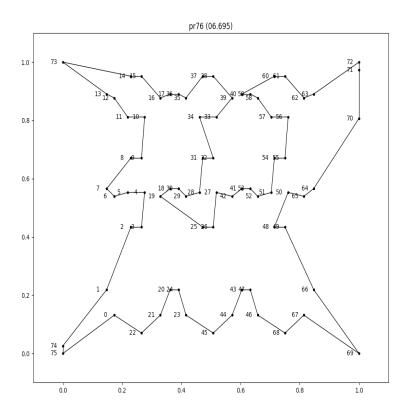
7.4 hk48



- 0 1 273
- 1 47 335
- 47 14 236
- 14 42 252
- 42 20 189
- 20 32 318
- 32 29 669
- 29 22 326
- 29 22 326 22 8 197
- 8 9 177
- 9 39 130
- 39 35 345

```
35 33 83
33 5 188
5 7 182
7 46 177
46 6 138
6 37 178
37 13 115
13 17 90
17 11 238
11 21 165
21 12 100
12 27 90
27 31 154
31 24 161
24 2 155
2 4 140
4 28 217
28 25 129
25 40 291
40 23 238
23 34 166
34 16 123
16 30 235
30 19 214
19 10 563
10 15 96
15 41 371
41 3 387
3 45 443
45 44 229
44 38 145
38 43 534
43 26 347
26 36 357
36 18 346
18 0 229
The cost of the best tour is: 11461.0
```

7.5 pr76



```
0 22 1931
22 21 1433
21 20 1193
```

20 24 55024 23 1118

23 45 1931

45 44 1433

44 43 1193

43 47 550

47 46 1118

46 68 1931

68 67 1433

67 69 3946

69 66 3905

66 49 3100

49 48 700

48 50 1629

50 65 1053 65 64 716

- 64 70 4070
- 70 71 1900
- 71 72 300
- 72 63 3250
- 63 62 667
- 62 61 1512
- 61 60 700
- 60 40 2261
- 40 59 550
- 59 58 522
- 58 57 1164
- 57 56 1118
- 56 55 1617
- 55 54 700
- 54 51 1364
- 51 52 906 52 53 583
- 53 41 550
- 41 42 716
- 42 27 1053
- 27 26 1369
- 26 25 700
- 25 19 3046
- 19 18 716
- 18 30 550
- 30 29 583
- 29 28 906
- 28 31 1364
- 31 32 700
- 32 34 1841 34 33 1118
- 33 39 1280
- 39 38 1512
- 38 37 700
- 37 35 1390
- 35 36 522
- 36 17 550
- 17 16 667
- 16 15 1512
- 15 14 700
- 14 73 4533
- 73 13 3158
- 13 12 522
- 12 11 1164
- 11 10 1118 10 9 1617
- 9 8 700
- 8 7 2000
- 7 6 583
- 6 5 906

```
5 4 1115

4 3 1369

3 2 700

2 1 2926

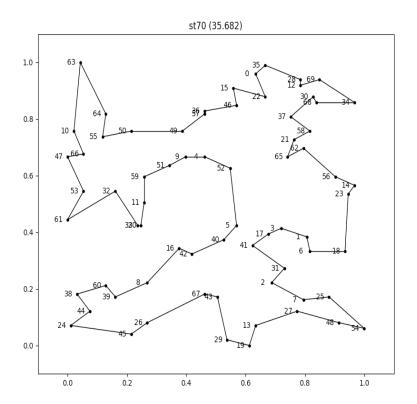
1 74 3640

74 75 300

75 0 3716

The cost of the best tour is: 108159.0
```

7.6 st70



```
0 22 9
22 15 10
```

^{15 46 6}

^{15 46 6}

^{46 36 10}

^{36 57 1}

^{57 49 9}

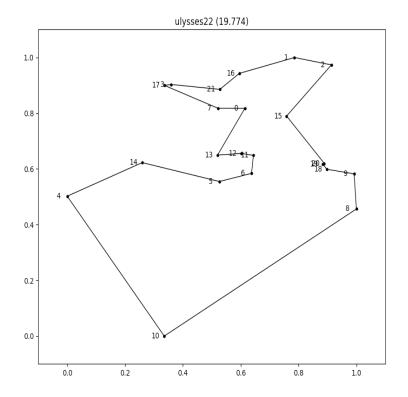
^{49 50 16}

```
50 55 9
55 64 8
64 63 20
63 10 24
10 47 9
47 66 5
66 53 13
53 61 11
61 32 18
32 33 14
33 20 1
20 11 8
11 59 9
59 51 9
51 9 6
9 4 6
4 52 9
52 5 20
5 40 6
40 42 11
42 16 4
16 8 16
8 39 11
39 60 5
60 38 9
38 44 7
44 24 8
24 45 19
45 26 6
26 67 21
67 43 4
43 29 15
29 19 7
19 13 7
13 27 14
27 48 14
48 54 8
54 25 16
25 7 8
7 2 12
2 31 6
31 41 13
41 17 6
17 3 4
3 1 9
1 6 5
6 18 11
18 23 20
23 14 4
```

14 56 7

```
56 62 14
62 65 6
65 21 6
21 58 6
58 37 8
37 30 10
30 68 2
68 34 12
34 69 14
69 12 6
12 28 2
28 35 12
35 0 4
The cost of the best tour is: 675.0
```

7.7 ulysses22



0 7 60

```
17
      278
17
   3
       37
   21
       171
3
       148
   16
16
   1
       246
1
   2
       126
   15
       499
15
   20
       486
20
  19
       14
19
   18
       33
   9
       96
18
   8
       328
9
8
   10
       1387
10
   4
       1504
       401
4
   14
14
   5
       308
   6
       115
5
6
   11 177
11 12 68
12 13 52
13 0
       479
The cost of the best tour is: 7013.0
```

References

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