

Raid Corsica

1000km cycling challenge around the stunning island of Corsica, with 14,600m of ascent, all in 6 days of cycling!

Summary

WHERE: Corsica

DISTANCE: 1000km

TIME : 6 days

PRICE (2017) : £1300

DATES: May /Sept/Oct



Highlights

Tour of the 'Isle of Beauty'

Official Paris Addax Club route, certificate & medal

Stunning & varied scenery, coastal views and historic towns

Friendly 2 & 3* hotels with Corsican cuisine



The Raid Corsica

The Raid Corsica is a fabulous cycling challenge first set up by the Parisian Audax club, who also happened to think up the madness that is the Paris - Brest - Paris! Well, they know what it takes to make a fantastic cycling route, and the Raid Corsica or 'Tour de Corse', is a wonderful circuit of the island also known as the "Isle of Beauty". Ok, so another name for the island happens to translate as "Mountain in the Sea", but then what kind of Raid would be flat!

You will be following the official Raid Corsica route, so you need to have your Carnet stamped in a variety of different places along the way, and on successful completion of the Raid, there is a certificate and medal to reward you for your endeavours.

Corsica is the most mountainous and geographically diverse of the Mediterranean islands; its coastline lapped by inviting azure seas. Its terrain is varied - ranging from flatland marshes, the 'Desert des Agriates', and imposing granite peaks.

The Raid is a cycling challenge, but it is also your holiday. Marmot Tours has been supporting clients on our Raid challenges for a decade now and ensuring that you have a great time is what we are passionate about. You will love the ride, the country and the route, enjoying some great banter along the way. We leave no stone unturned in preparing for your holiday and making it the best it can be. Which is why you just have to eat sleep and turn the pedals...



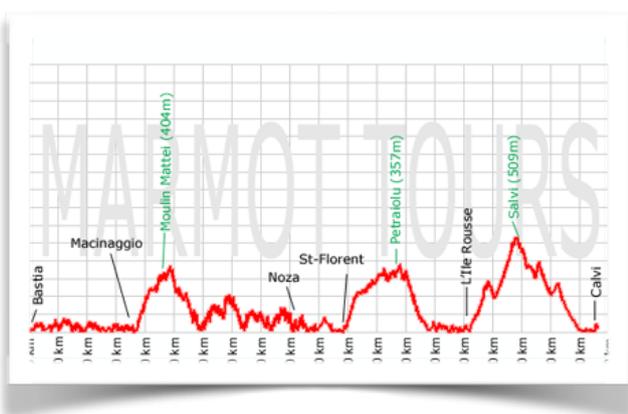
Your Raid Route

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Bastia airport to the start hotel in Bastia (45mins) or from Bastia Ferry port. Meet your guides, assemble and test out your bikes and come along to the welcome briefing followed by a good dinner with a Corsican influence in a harbour front restaurant. Bastia is an attractive seaside town with plenty of charm if you arrive early and wish to explore.

Day 01 - Bastia to Calvi 196KM WITH 2369M ASCENT

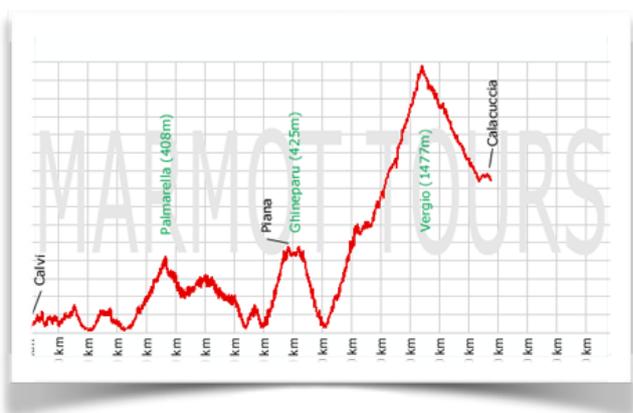
Starting early, we head North around the Cap Corse on a stunning 'coast road' linking together charming fishing villages with constant and spectacular views. Exploring the meaning of the word 'undulate' we get to St Florent for a well earned lunch and 'holiday moment'. It is best not to look too hard at the map here as we have cycled 108 km and are (as the crow flies) still only 18km from where we started! From St Florent we start to climb through an arid area known locally as the 'desert des Agriates' - interesting for geologists! A little more coast road follows before deviating inland over a couple of 'hills' on a quiet backroad with a great view of mountains meeting the coast, and our destination, way below. Calvi, with its harbour is one of the top tourist destinations on the island



and worth the after dinner stroll if you can muster the energy!

Day 02 - Calvi to Calacucci 158KM WITH 2860M ASCENT

Mt Cinto is a rugged and dramatic snowcapped peak, rising up to 2700m just over 20km from Calvi. It may inspire you (or fill you with fear), to hear that today's destination is 'just over the other side' of this mountain. We set off on another even more stunning (and even more undulating) coastline which takes us over a few named cols. The most noteworthy place on today's ride is 'Les Calanches' - a landscape of multicoloured spikes and spires towering above the deep blue waters. Amazing they may be, but you may find the 11km detour up to the hilltop



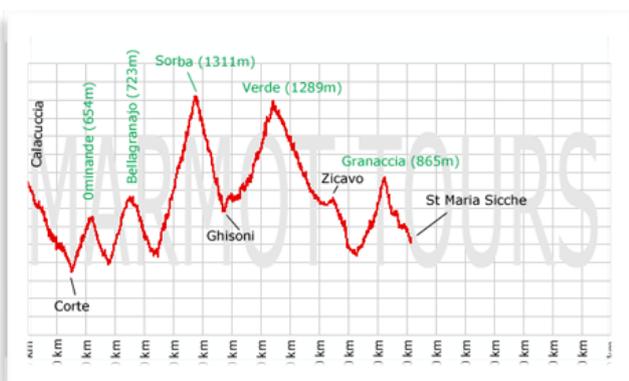
town of Pina for a 'tampon' takes 'Raiding' to another level! Next up is the highest road pass in Corsica - the Col de Vergio (1477). It is a baby compared to the mighty cols of the Alps or the Pyrenees, but you do start from sea level making it a fair challenge. All that remains is to roll down the hill to our hotel in the mountain hamlet of Calacuccia.

Day 03 - Calacucci to Santa Maria Sicche

Sicche

132KM WITH 2690M ASCENT

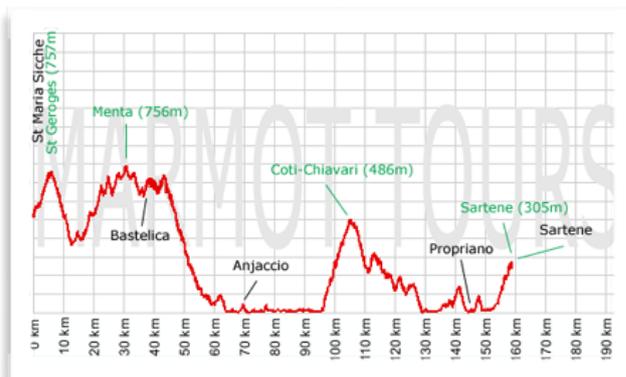
Today we explore the mountainous interior of the island. It is a great route taking us through deep gorges, thick forests and into the southern uplands. The historical capital of Corte is well placed for a morning coffee and a wander before taking to the road again (you are on holiday after all!). In total there are 5 cols today with the highest being the Col de Sorba (1311m). Our destination is the 'one dog village' of Santa Maria Sicche.



Day 04 - Santa Maria Sicche to Sartene

160KM WITH 2410M ASCENT

We start the day with a quick nip up to the mountainous village of Bastilica for a 'tampon' and a coffee. From here we descend to Ajaccio for a reality check with a brief spell on a main road.



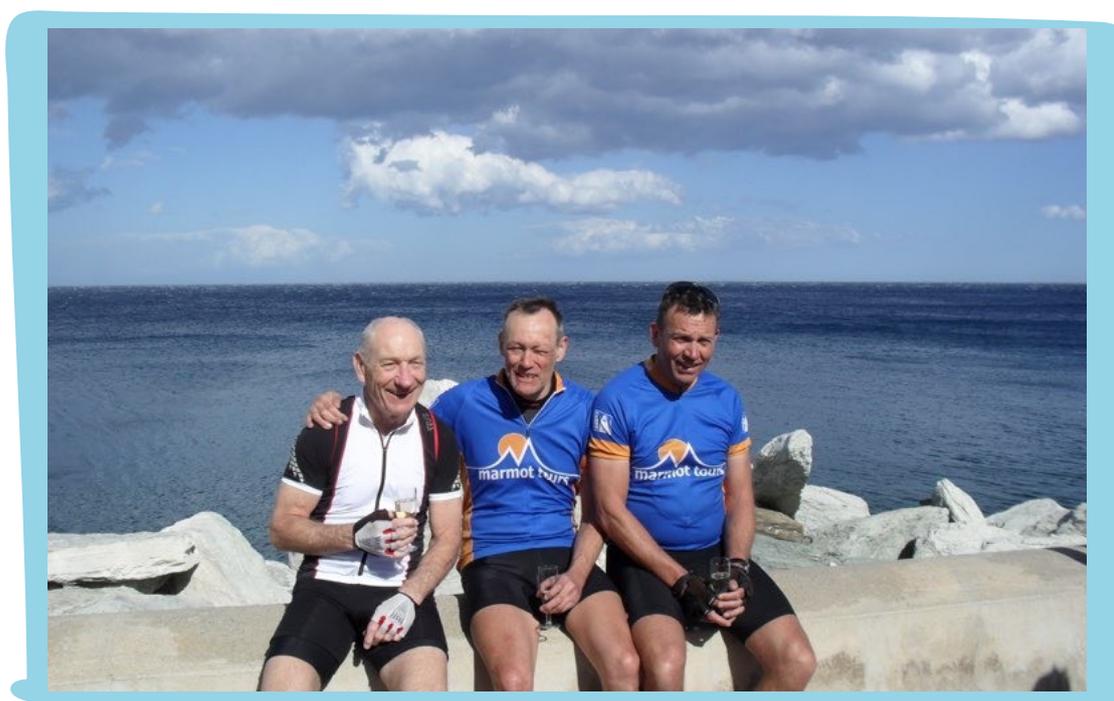
We are, however, soon back on the coast road linking one deserted sandy beach after another (naturally with a few undulations in between). Our destination is the hilltop town of Sartene, which has had a eventful history of pirates, banditry and vendettas! It is now fortunately a very pleasant town and has even been called 'the most Corsican of Corsican towns'.

Day 05 - Sartene to Aleria

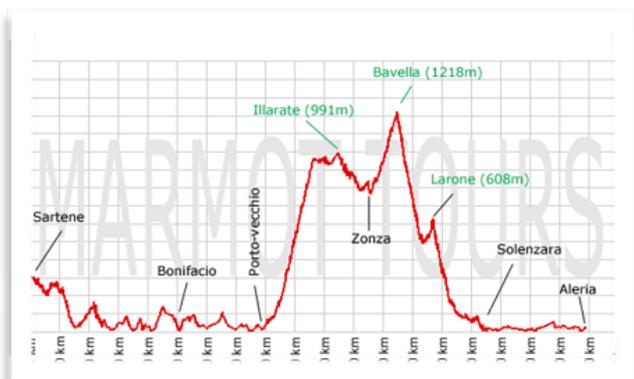
188km with 2430m ascent

Good tarmac, beautiful views, beaches, historic towns..... today is a holiday day (well the morning is anyway!). Eventually we get to the Southern tip of the island and the town of Bonifacio, surrounded by towering limestone cliffs - it is a 'tampon town' and well worth taking the time to visit.

Make sure you try the local nut and raisin bread, which is a lot better than its name "the bread of



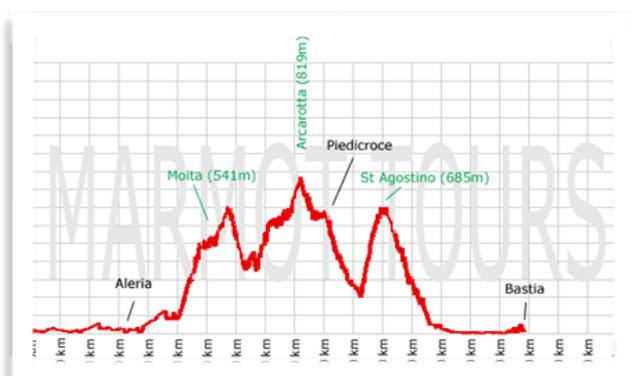
the dead"! Here we leave the coast and turn inland once again heading for the Col de Bavella



(1218m). This is followed by a great descent to the understated seaside town and port of Solenzara and on a further (flat!) 35kms to our resting place for the night - Aleria.

Day 06 - Aleria to Bastia 133KM WITH 2060M ASCENT

Heading North from Aleria there is a lovely 'flat' road all the way to Bastia, however the Parisian Audax Club decided that it would be a good idea



to head back into the hills! To give them their due, it is a beautiful route past small 'untouched' villages and terraced hillsides so far more interesting than the easy way! It is a ride to be taken slowly however, be warned there are some cheeky little climbs.

Eventually we drop back to the coast and join a sandy spur for the final run into Bastia where all that is left to do is negotiate the unfortunately positioned hilltop Citadel, before descending back to the hotel, where it all began only 6 days ago!

Now its...

Party Time!

Day 07 - Travel Back

We offer included transfers to drop you at either Bastia airport or ferry port throughout the day. Contact us to check your proposed travel plans.

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps, altitude profiles, detailed directions with distance markers and GPS files for those of you with a unit. Our guides will also endeavour to be at any 'easy to miss' junctions.

GPS files are provided a few weeks prior to your trip, and are available in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto any Garmin unit and in their most basic form provide a 'purple line' to follow, however with the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel and are updated regularly.

How does it compare?

Corsica is definitely a 'holiday island', but this road cycling challenge is comparable to the other raids ([Pyrenean](#), [Alpine](#) and [Dolomites](#)).

There is less 'big col' climbing involved, and more distance than on the other Raids offered by Marmot, with an average daily route of 166kms. Having said 'less climbing', there are still some fabulous and significant cols, such as the Vergio at 1477m and Sorba, Verde and Bavella all at over 1200m.

Though the climbs are not as high as the mainland mountain ranges, the point to note is that they often start from sea level! Overall the average daily ascent comes in at 2683m. So, all in all, this isn't an easy option!



Am I Fit Enough? Banish the doubt...

It is possible (some would say probable) that the seed of doing a Raid was planted in your mind when you had a drink in hand, chatting with mates. In the light of day it is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough to take it on! All our Raid routes are challenging and you need to be a regular road cyclist in order to enjoy and get the most out of this trip. We only want you to book on this holiday if it is right for you.

Many of our riders are club cyclists or have done cyclosporives or some longer distance rides. However, by no means all of them have and, we have had many clients who have been fairly new to road cycling (but who have a good level of fitness perhaps from a different sport) who have effectively trained for the trip and successfully completed the Raid Corsica. As a first Raid however, most people tend to start with the Raid Pyrenean as it is just 4.5 days in the saddle.

Pacing

The key to success on the Raid Corsica is pacing yourself, and we are very keen to emphasise that you don't need to be cycling super fast in order to manage the daily routes. The absolute worst thing is to push yourself to cycle beyond your normal pace on the cols, or early on in the trip. This ends up becoming very tiring and can cause problems on later days. The joy of the Marmot Raid Corsica is that you have 3 support vehicles

per group - 1 taking luggage to the hotel and the other 2 supporting the group.

Training

You owe it to yourself to train for the Raid... we want you to achieve your goals and to enjoy the whole experience. The fitter you are the more you can relax and take note of the stunning route and throw yourself into the Marmot group banter. It can be difficult finding extended climbs for the training in the UK, but generally if you can build up your comfort in doing long daily distances, and your stamina, then you will really benefit when it comes to the Raid itself. We can't pretend to offer practical help when you are spinning on the turbo in the garage, or cycling up a short sharp UK climb in the driving rain, but know that we are with you in spirit, and that everyone else doing a Raid is going through what you are - in fact why not share your training joys and miseries on our Facebook page - you are not alone!

If, after reading this, you really can't banish the doubt then it may be worth you looking at one of our Classic Cols style holidays as a starter. You get to climb the same climbs but there is ultimate flexibility on the holiday as you can choose your route each day from the options: a 'classic' route with perhaps one col a day, or the 'challenge' route with optional extras and gruelling stage endings. We offer Classic Cols itineraries in the Pyrenees, Alps, Dolomites, Picos, Corsica and new for 2017, Gran Canaria!

Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, and to compare themselves to their peers using 'segments', for instance.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance, and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore encourage our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday or Challenge, especially descending, and to focus on the road at all times.

Guiding

"Our best ever Raid and the support from your team was 1st Class" J Wright

Supporting you on your holiday will be 2 of our highly experienced, fun, approachable and knowledgeable guides, plus an additional guide and vehicle managing hotel bags. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Two vehicles means you do not need to stay together as a group so you can cycle at your own pace whether that be speedy or steady. It also means that wherever you are in the group (front/back or in-between), you will have access to your personal kit, snacks and water, and any mechanical or first aid support. In the event that you need help for a mechanical (for example) there are 2 vans on the road so one will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't

need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well. Our multi vehicle system also enables us to ensure your luggage is at the hotel before you arrive.

You can expect to see a support van between 5 and 10 times a day so you don't need to carry much on your bike unless the weather is exceptional!

"The Raid was absolutely fantastic. I don't have enough superlatives to describe the trip.. Rani and Debbie were always in the right place at the right time with excellent support" P Murray

It is worth a note about **speedy cyclists who don't like stopping**. It is in your favour if we can plan with you how to balance your needs against those of others in the group so you can have upmost flexibility regarding pacing etc. If you think you are going to be very fast then contact us to talk about this and what we can offer you as someone way ahead of others in the group.

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to a maximum of 20 clients. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone, and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we also get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to challenge themselves on holiday!



Accommodation

We stay in a selection of 2 and 3* hotels with en suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement of £280 (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. We're in France of course, so expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with Dorset cereals and fruit. Some hotels (not all) offer cheese & meats for your protein kick start.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding, and it is not likely to be the same as what the other guys and gals in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. You can get access to the tasty Corsican cuisine on offer in local cafes and restaurants which is great for you, and for them. We can point out some cycle friendly places en route and will be sure to have a van there so you can have your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snackshop will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Cereal bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), dried fruit & nuts & sweets are the staples but your guides grab whatever opportunity presents to have fresh boulangerie products (croissants, quiche etc) and summer fruits on board for that mid afternoon 'pick me up'. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route and we find clients are quite 'brand' specific in terms of what they like. For 2015 we have asked our hotels to also provide fresh semi-skimmed milk as a recovery drink on arrival at the hotel. Not all hotels will be able to manage this (the French drink UHT milk!) but where possible, it will be there!

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect 3 or 4 courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19.30. Wine at dinner is included both during the trip and on the last night of celebrations! You've earned it! Coffees/soft drinks and beers are however not included (we'd be broke!)

Special diets

Please contact us with any special dietary requirements. Whilst the French find it notoriously difficult to understand the concept of vegetarianism, we have worked with our hotels for a long time and they have accordingly improved their services to vegetarians. We need to give them plenty of warning however, and need clients to firmly be either vegetarian for the trip or not - they (and the guides) find it hard if clients are vegetarian for some meals and not for others. Coeliacs and other intolerances can also be provided for and we can communicate with you individually and prepare to make sure you have the right food throughout your trip.

Whats Included

Trip Price: £1300 (twin share)

Single Room Supplement: £280

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers @ specified times
- Route notes/directions/maps/GPS files
- Raid Corsica registration + certificate & medal for successful Raiders
- 7 nights half board accommodation & table wine @ dinner (includes celebratory meal on the last night)
- 2 customised & well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral, mechanical & medical support, plus snacks & water. 1 extra vehicle managing luggage
- Raid Corsica Pack: Raid musette, 750ml water bottle, Raid Corsica velopac, Marmot Buff
- Raid Jersey available to purchase pre or post trip for £28.00



Start (& end!)

Hotel Alivi, Route du Cap, 20200 San Martin di Lota, France (+33 (0)495550000)

Travel

Marmot Tours includes airport transfers from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible - we are slaves to the airline timetables!

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to get public transport to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

Airport Transfers 2017

Our pick up/drop off times are when we will be leaving the airport, all being well. Please don't book flights arriving later than suggested below (in brackets) for the pick up, or flights leaving earlier than suggested below (in brackets) for the drop off.

7th May Pick up: Bastia Airport 09.45 (for EJ LGW flight arriving 09:25)

14th May Pick up: Bastia Airport 10:20 (for EJ LGW flight & EJ Manchester arrival 10:00)

24th Sept Pick up AM: Bastia Airport 10.15 (for EJ LGW flight arriving 09:25)

PM: Bastia Airport 15:40 (for EJ LGW flight arriving 15:20)

1st Oct Pick up: Bastia Airport 09.45 (for EJ LGW flight arriving 09:25)

Drop off (all trip dates): Bastia Airport 08.30 (for flights leaving after 10.05)

Bastia airport to Bastia takes 30 - 45 mins depending on traffic. If you cannot arrive to meet our transfer times below, you can get an airport taxi to Bastia (approx. cost €60)

Flights 2017

Depending on your departure dates various airlines fly to Bastia including EJ (from LGW and at times, Manchester), Air France (via Paris Orly) and Air Corsica (via Marseille/Nice).

If you are flying long haul, you can fly into LGW or Geneva for EJ flights on to Bastia. We recommend arriving into Corsica a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you commence your Raid.

We have lots of experience in helping clients get to and from the Raid in the simplest and most cost effective way so contact us at cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk if you need more detailed information.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere then do let us know and we may be able to help you with your travel plans.

Ferry Port Transfers

We are able to do a pick up from Bastia Ferry Terminal - although if an arrival time clashes with the airport pick ups you may need to wait, or take a taxi (only 5mins to the hotel) Corsica Ferries operate day ferries departing from Nice or overnight ferries from Toulon.

We can also advise generally on using the train in France or driving to the start of your holiday.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours trips. Anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the cycle so please make sure you arrange cover. We recommend sorting your insurance when you book so that if you have problems during training and need to cancel, you are covered.

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) with the following fairly standard inclusions:

Medical Expenses
Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

Cancellation cover
Loss or damage to their bike.

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

We will ask you to complete a form with your policy number and emergency contact details for the trip but in the meantime we don't need any confirmation of your cover.

Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team.

Prices: £40/day on the bike including an insurance fee. For full spec and dimensions, please look at our website Bike Hire page

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine

- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.
- We comply with the legislation and Tourism Code for the countries we work in. Accordingly, in France we are registered with ATOUT France, the French registration body for Tour Operators. Marmot Tours holds a Tour Operators License (IM009120008) awarded by ATOUT (July 2012) .

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500)

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning
3. Find your trip page on www.marmot-tours.co.uk and follow the link to our online booking form
4. Receive an automated email with payment options for your £200 deposit, and arrange payment
5. Await contact from Kate / Catherine / Sabine in the office regarding confirmation of your booking.
6. We send out a detailed Raid Guide around 6 weeks before your holiday but are here to answer questions at any time

