

83hr Raid Pyrenean

720km cycling challenge from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic
in just 83 hours

Summary

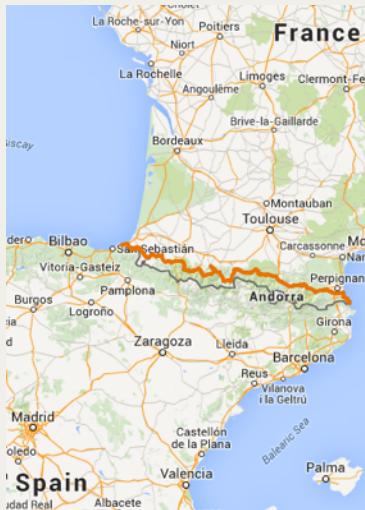
WHERE : Pyrenees

DISTANCE : 706km

TIME : 83 hours

PRICE (2016) : £800

DATES : Early Summer



Highlights

Spectacular Pyrenean
traverse from East to
West on official Raid
route

4 Tour de France style
days

Support from 2 expert
guides in custom vans



What is the 83hr Raid P?

The Raid Pyrenean is a classic traverse of the Pyrenees to which we are no stranger; we support over 200 people a year to achieve the 100hr Raid from the Atlantic to the Med . We also wanted to offer the route in the opposite direction, from the Med to the Atlantic: the climbs are different and the challenge elevated so the sense of achievement is even greater!

As usual we follow the official Cyclo Club Béarnais route, giving an average of 177km with 3200m of ascent per day (something akin to 4 Tour de France stages!). Not for the faint hearted, it is perfect for those of you accustomed to multi day events, and riding in the mountains, perhaps with a Raid or two already under your belt.

You won't be disappointed by the beauty of the Pyrenees, the respect from French drivers, and if you have done the 100hr Raid, how very different this one feels travelling in the other direction.

This is a cycling challenge, but it is also your holiday 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 01 - Travel Day

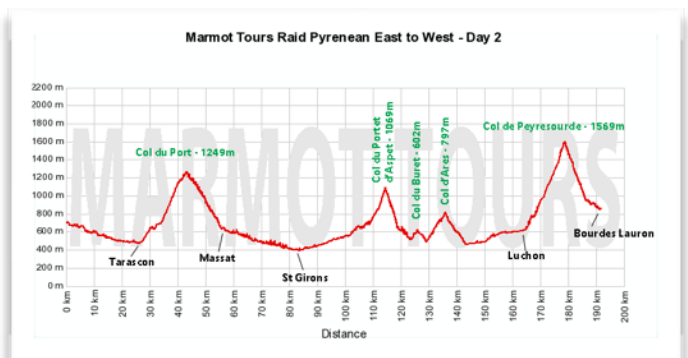
We offer included transfers from Toulouse airport to the start hotel in Cerbere (3hrs). Meet your guides, assemble and test out your bikes and come along to the welcome briefing followed by a hearty dinner with a Catalan influence. Cerbere is an attractive seaside town with plenty of charm if you arrive early and wish to explore.

Day 02 - Cerbere to Ax les Thermes 186KM WITH 3850M ASCENT

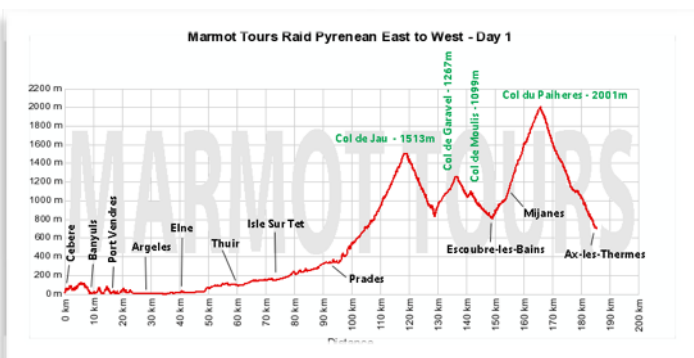
The sun rising over the Mediterranean at 07:00 is our cue to get on the bikes! You start off undulating your way along the rocky coastline with dramatic views, punctuated by still sleepy seaside resorts. Turning inland and with the sun beating on your back, you start to climb gently through blossoming orchard fields to Prades. Here things start to get a bit more 'interesting' as we climb out of the Mediterranean plain, through dry scrub, followed by lush meadows and then finally into the pine forest of the Col du Jau (1506m). The cool forested descent gives you a chance to recover before the rather abrupt climb

of the Col du Garavel (1262m) and the hardly noticeable Col des Moulis (1099m). The key thing today is pacing - we are already 150km into the ride and the much feared eastern approach of the mighty Col de Pailheres (2001m) has to be tackled before the stage end. The spa town of Ax-les-Thermes and the friendly and comfortable Hotel Terminus will be very welcome tonight!

Day 03 - Ax to Arreau 192KM WITH 3000M ASCENT



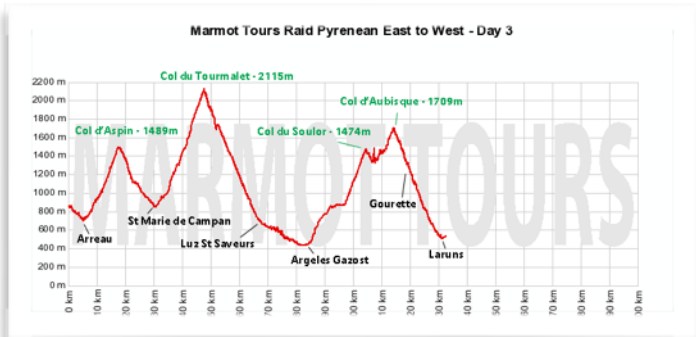
With the knowledge that perhaps the toughest day of the trip is under our belt, we start the day with a gentle descent to warm up the legs for the very pleasant gradients of the Col de Port (1249m). Your reward is a magnificent view back down the valley towards Ax and beyond! The long sweeping descent into St Giron for a 'tampon' is followed by a long sweeping ascent to the Col de Portet D'Aspet (1069m) - from this side it is really only the last 3km that gets the heart pounding. You will have the opportunity to pay your respects to Fabio Casartelli on the way down, before the lovely low level climbs of the Col De Buret (602m) and the Col Des Ares (797m).



After a bit of grind up the valley to Luchon we take on the Tour de France favourite - the Col de Peyresourde (1569m). Here the café serves the perfect recovery food - 12 sugary crepes for €4! All you need to do then is roll down the valley to your hotel in Arreau.

Day 04 - Laruns to Hendaye 195KM WITH 2500M ASCENT

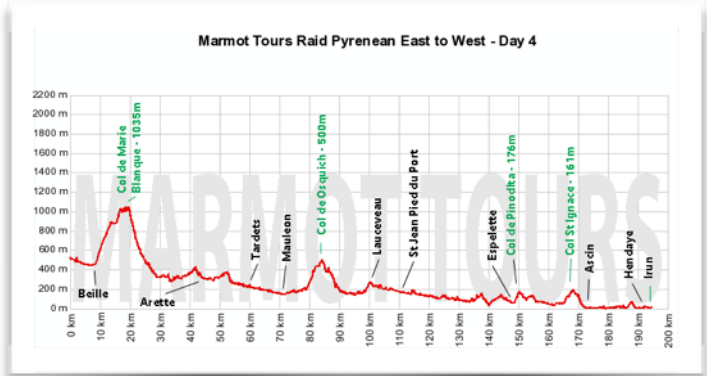
The Col de Marie Blanche (1035m) has reared its ugly head in a few Etapes and people tend to take a deep breath before they even talk about it. You will be pleased to hear that it is the Western side that has gained this infamous reputation and that the Eastern approach is relatively flat and pleasant (in comparison!). It does however mean we do need to go a bit steady on the descent! This is the gateway to the Basque lands and a series of 'insignificant' cols leads us nicely to the Col de Osquich (500m). White chalet style buildings with burgundy shutters, bullrings, pelot courts, signs trying to tempt us to taste sheep's cheese and red hot chillies hanging from buildings are common sightings for the rest of the day. Your final 'proper' climb is the Col St Ignace (161m) which takes you down the Atlantic coast road and onwards to the Raid finish in Hendaye. You have to get in by 18:00 to have completed the 83 hr challenge!



Day 03- Arreau to Laruns 133KM WITH 3500M ASCENT

The Col d'Aspin (1489m) has to be the most beautiful col in the Pyrenees and first thing in the morning it is sure to be a highlight of your trip. This is cow country so you will be accompanied by the constant sound of their bells, but be warned that not knowing where the next beast will be does add a certain element of uncertainty to the descent! Next up is a climb that needs no introduction - the Col de Tourmalet (2115m) - less said the better!

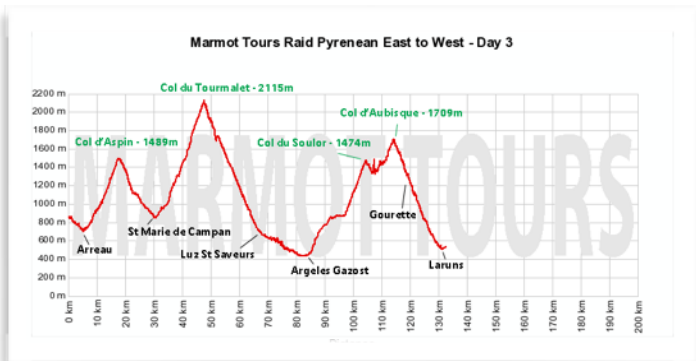
After a bit of souvenir shopping at the top (where there is also a great café with some interesting Tour de France artefacts), you descend to Luz Saint Saviour and down the gorge to Argeles Gazost. There is not much flat today as you head straight into the Col de Soulor (1464m) and the cliff hugging road up to the stunningly beautiful Col D'Aubisque (1709m). This is followed by an exhilarating descent to the pretty market town of Laruns - day 3 in the bag!



Tonight you stay in a hotel overlooking the sandy beach - the perfect place to enjoy a celebratory meal as the sun sets over the Atlantic.

Day 07 - Travel Day

Our included transfers drop you back at Toulouse or Biarritz airport. Please read on to the Travel section for more details.





Banish the doubt...

To be able to successfully complete this challenge and enjoy it, you do need to be a regular road cyclist and we would highly recommend that you have a couple of Raids already under your belt!

Clients who sign up to this holiday are regular fit cyclists and club riders who have done cyclosporives and some longer distance rides. It is our hardest multi day itinerary (the Ventoux Assault is obviously equally challenging but is really only a one day event).

Pacing

The key to success on the 83hr Raid Pyrenean, as with our other Raid challenges, is pacing yourself, though due to the long distances involved each day, this trip is not suitable for slower cyclists. Going too fast on Day 1 will however take its toll on the following days of the Raid, so you need to be aware of your optimum performance levels.

The joy of the Marmot 83hr Raid is that you have 2 support vehicles and we will support you on the road from sunrise to sunset! This trip is run in June where the long daylight hours give you that extra time in the day.

Training

You owe it to yourself to train properly for the 83hr Raid Pyrenean... we want you to achieve your

goals and to enjoy the whole Raid experience. We would recommend that you get advice on training from a suitably qualified friend/colleague/club mate/gym instructor or personal trainer.

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 Pyrenean 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 either one of our standard Raids, such as the 100hr Raid Pyrenean, or the Raid Alpine (N-S), or one of our Classic Cols itineraries. Here you get to climb the same climbs in the same direction, 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.

Guiding

“Tez and Graham were absolutely fantastic. From putting our bags in the rooms to having slices of cake ready at the top of climbs, they thought of everything. They always had words of encouragement and I was astonished how they were in a good mood from 7am to 11pm.” A Scully

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our highly experienced, fun, approachable and knowledgeable guides. 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 where ever 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 2 van 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!

“Despite feeling knackered, I can't help but feeling slightly more alive having being pushed slightly closer to the edge” T Peck

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to a maximum of 16. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge that it feels impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone, and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 14 - 16 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, and those raising money for charity to ex-pro cyclists.



Accommodation

The 2 and 3* hotels we use have been selected for their location along the authentic Raid Pyrenean route (you don't want to be adding extra kms by heading off route!), and for their attitude to cyclists and their stomachs! You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement of £150 (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. Breakfast is generally available from 07:00.

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. This means you get access to the tasty French cuisine on offer in local cafe's and restaurants which is good for you, and also for the local community. We can point out some great 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 (it's the rustic Pyrenees and 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: £800 (twin share basis)

Single Room supplement: £150

- 4 days supported riding
- Airport transfers @ specified times
- Route notes/directions/maps/GPS files
- Raid Pyrenean registration + certificate & medal for successful Raiders
- 5 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.
- Marmot Tours Raid Pack: Raid musette bag, 750ml water bottle, Raid Pyrenean velopac



Start & end

Start: Hotel La Dorade, 66290, Cerbere (Tel +33 46888193)

End: Hotel Lafon, 99 Boulevard de la Mer, 64700, Hendaye (Tel +33 559200467)

Travel

Marmot Tours includes airport transfers from the most convenient airport(s) for the start of your trip.

Point to point travel can be difficult to organise. We have lots of experience in helping clients get to and from the Raid in the simplest and most cost effective way. This advice may vary from trip to trip as we are slaves to the airline timetables, so contact us at cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for detailed information on your particular departure date.

Airport Transfers

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed.

Toulouse Airport to Cerbere (3hrs), Hendaye to Biarritz Airport (30mins) or Hendaye to Toulouse Airport (4hrs)

Pick up: Toulouse Airport 12:30 (for flights arriving before 12:00)

Drop off: Biarritz Airport 08:00 (for flights leaving after 09:30)
Toulouse Airport 14:00 (for flights leaving after 16:00)

Flights

Depending on your departure dates various airlines fly direct to Toulouse: BA (from LHR), EJ (from Bristol & LGW) and Jet 2 (from Manchester) for the outward flight.

Biarritz Airport is serviced by both Easy Jet (LGW) and Ryan Air (Stansted) for the return flight.

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.

If you are travelling long haul for this challenge then we recommend arriving into France a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start 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: £33.50/day on the bike + 10% insurance fee. For full spec and dimensions, please look at our website

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 and Catherine 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

