

TdF Special 2018

The Marmot annual Tour de France Extravaganza, this year at Alpe d'Huez! Set yourself against the mighty climbs made famous by TdF professionals

Summary

WHERE: French Alps
DISTANCE: To suit you
TIME : 6 days
COST: £1900 (twin share)
DATES: 15th-22nd July



Highlights

Stage 12 summit finish and Stage 13 start live from the roadside

Marmot's 'legendary' Hospitality Suite

Flexible itinerary - suitable for mixed ability group

Alpe d'Huez, Galibier, Croix de Fer, Madeleine



Tour de France Special

Since 1952, L'Alpe d'Huez has featured regularly and famously in the Tour de France. Its 21 hairpins have given the mountain an iconic reputation and when the Tour visits, L'Alpe d'Huez becomes the very epicentre of festivities. Winners of an Alpe d'Huez stage have their name added to one of the hairpin signs, to be revered by infinite numbers of 'normal' cyclists who challenge themselves up this climb year on year. For Tour de France supporters, nowhere else offers the same opportunity for Tour immersion: over half a million people are expected to descend on the mountain for just this one week in July. For many companies, the chance of securing accommodation in L'Alpe d'Huez are nil, but we have nurtured our hotel relationships for many years and as a result, we have booked the entire Hotel Chamois in the centre of the resort for 4 nights. This hotel's prime location could not be better for lapping up the ambience (hysteria?!) of the summit stage ending and for maneuvering to within arm's reach of the pros at the start of Stage 13 the following day. Throw in a barbecue lunch on the sun terrace of the hotel with big screen TV coverage of the approaching riders and a spectator's TDF experience could not get much better ... This is not just any 'Tour de France Holiday' - this is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

You'll also have the chance to ride most of the Classic TDF climbs of the surrounding valleys (at your own pace!), including the Galibier, Croix de Fer, Madeleine and the modern classic of the Lacets de Montvernier ... not forgetting L'Alpe d'Huez itself. The serenity of the neighbouring mountains to Alpe d'Huez will be the perfect antidote to the hype of the Tour.

Holiday Cost

Twin share trip price: £1900. This trip is more expensive than previous years due to the high cost and limited availability of accommodation in L'Alpe d'Huez.

Single Room Supplement: £680. (The hotel in L'Alpe d'Huez does not have any single rooms, so you are effectively paying the accommodation costs for two people).

Triple Share Discount: £200. This discount will be applied if you indicate on your booking form that you are happy to share a triple room for the 4 nights in L'Alpe d'Huez. You will be in a twin room for the 3 nights in St Jean de Maurienne.

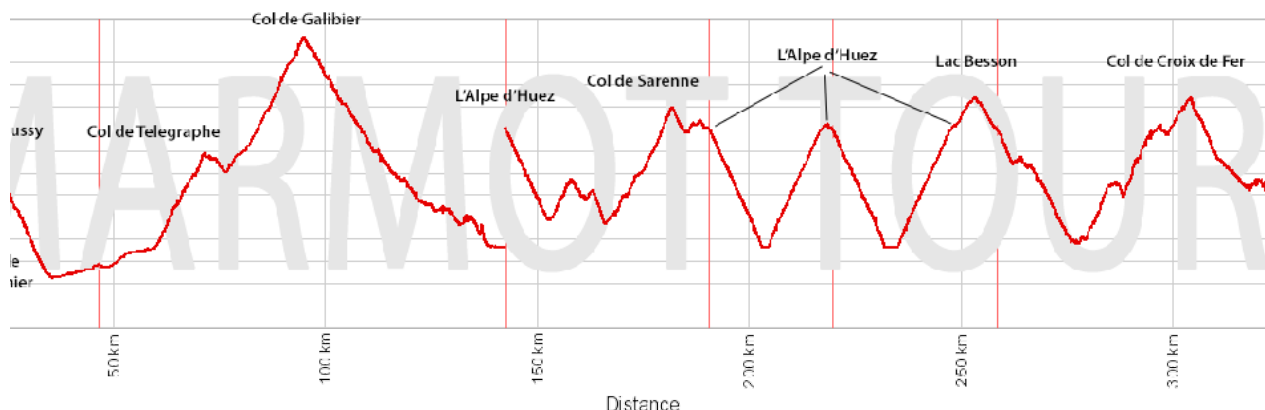
Other discounts: As always if you book more than 6 months before the trip we will give you a 5% discount and loyal clients will receive a 10% discount off the basic holiday price.

What's Included

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers @ specified times
- Route notes/directions/maps/GPS files
- 7 nights half board accommodation & table wine @ dinner. BBQ lunch @ Marmot Tours Hospitality Suite in Alpe d'Huez
- 3 customised & well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral, mechanical & medical support, plus snacks & water.
- Marmot Tours Cycling Jersey, 750ml Marmot Tours water bidon x 1 and Marmot Tours RideGuard Ass Saver

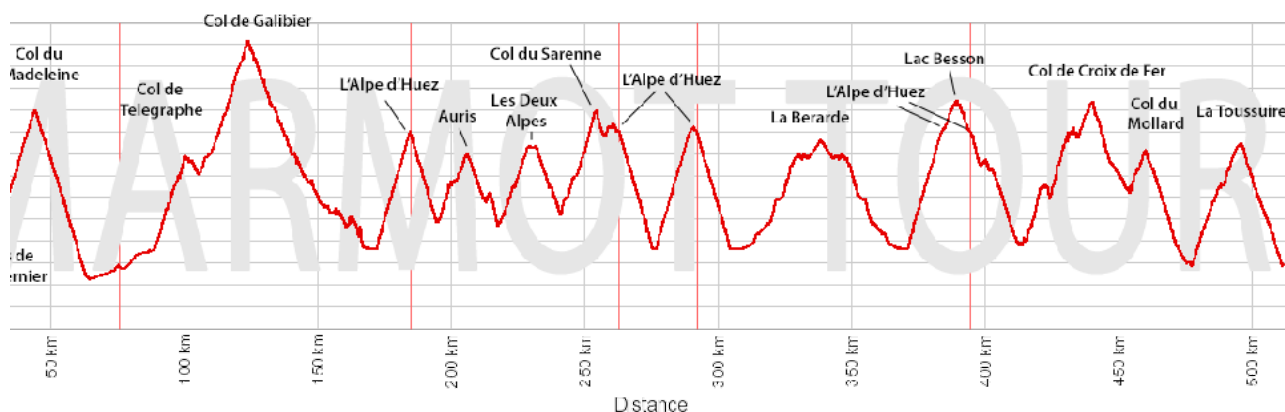
Classic Route

Marmot Tours - Tour de France 2018 - Classic Ride Profile



Challenge Route

Marmot Tours - Tour de France 2018 - Challenge Ride Profile





Itinerary

Day 0 - 15th July Travel Out

We offer morning and afternoon transfers from Geneva Airport (GVA) to our start hotel in Saint Jean de Maurienne, a journey of about 1hr 30 mins.

There will be time to assemble your bikes or set up your **hire bike** before a briefing and hearty dinner with the group.

Day 01: Montvernier, Chaussy & the Madeleine

Saint Jean de Maurienne is a Mecca for road cyclists from all around the world and today you'll find out why.

The gravity-defying stack of hairpins of the Lacets de Montvernier is a classic and a Marmot Tours favourite that is bound to put a smile on your face. This leads nicely into the **Col de Chaussy (1533m)** which is a 'characterful' climb with spectacular views to ease the pain of the few punchy sections.

Following a nice lunch, retiring back to the hotel to find a TV for some Tour viewing is a good option, or for those with energy left to burn, you will be seriously tempted to take on the Col de Madeleine (2000m)

Classic Route:

Montvernier + Chaussy (47km with 1200m ascent)

Challenge Route:

Montvernier + Chaussy + Madeleine (76km with 2350m ascent)

Day 02: Telegraphe, Galibier & l'Alpe d'Huez

Your main objective today is the **Col de Galibier (2642m)** which whilst not featuring in the 2018 TdF route, is steeped in Tour history. Starting down at 550m, it is a climb full of variety and character as you rise out of the industrial valley floor, through lush forests to the **Col de Telegraphe (1566m)**. After a little respite in the ski station of Valoire you continue through open moorland and spectacular mountain scenery motivating you onwards and upwards to the Col.

What goes up must come down and your efforts are rewarded with an incredible 50km (yes, 50km!) descent down to Le Bourg d'Oisans. Here you have the option of jumping in our support van for a lift back to the hotel, or the opportunity of taking on the infamous Alpe d'Huez climb for the first time.

Our accommodation for the next 4 nights is the comfortable and welcoming Hotel Chamois in the heart of L'Alpe d'Huez.

Classic Route:

Telegraphe + Galibier (96km with 2300m ascent)

Challenge Route:

Telegraphe + Galibier + L'Alpe d'Huez (110km with 3370m ascent)



Day 03: Auris, Les Deux Alpes & Col de Sarenne

On the eve of the Tour de France Stage 12 finish the tension will be mounting as spectators battle for any 'flat' piece of land on the already-full 21 bends. Over half a million people are expected on the mountain, so the atmosphere is sure to be electric.

Descend through a sea of camper vans on a road freshly adorned with the names of cycling idols. Just before hairpin 5, we turn off on a cliff-hugging balcony road that edges its way up the Oisan valley to Auris and Le Freney. Here we cross over the barrage of Lac Chambon and start the climb up to the Col de Sarenne (1999m) before descending back to our hotel.

As always there are extra options for a little more time on the bike and the ski stations of Auris (1595m) and Les Deux Alpes (1650m) are both very worthwhile additions.

Classic Route:

Auris balcony road + Sarenne (48km with 1600m ascent)

Challenge Route:

Auris ski station + Les Deux Alpes + Sarenne (79km with 2450m ascent)

Day 04: Le Tour @ L'Alpe d'Huez

Today you will be at the very heart of the action! Watching the Tour de France live from L'Alpe d'Huez is a goal for anyone even vaguely interested in cycling.

Your day is very flexible so you can get out of it exactly what you want and there is no need to even look at your own bike if you want to focus on the Tour festivities! However, it might be nice to descend (carefully) down to Le Bourg d'Oisans and then head back up the Alpe D'Huez to lap up the ambience of the 14km long street party. Assuming that you make it past 'Dutch Corner', it is well worth heading to the stage finish to see the scale of this mobile roadshow.

Back on the sun terrace of the hotel (150m from the road and 1km from the actual finish) you can enjoy the Marmot Tours Hospitality Suite with **Tour de France Special 2018**

BBQ lunch and live TV coverage (with English commentary) of the approaching riders.

The show starts in earnest about 2 hours ahead of the riders when the elaborate publicity caravan fills the mountainside with blaring music, throwing out TDF memorabilia ranging from hats & washing powder to saucisson! A brief moment of calm follows until the arrival of helicopters heralds the approach of the pros and all the spectators go nuts! Need we say more ...

Optional ride:

Tour de France 2018 - L'Alpe d'Huez (29km with 1130m ascent)

Day 05: Stage 13 Start in le Bourg d'Oisans

In order to get a complete picture of the TDF, you really need to watch a stage start! The whole thing is geared up for spectators, with pros going out of their way to come and meet their fans. Riders have to sign in and are introduced to the audience before the inevitable final bike checks and line up. Finally it goes quiet as each rider prepares for the day's challenges that lie ahead.

All you have to do today (sore heads permitting!?) is roll down 'the hill' to Le Bourg D'Oisans, watch the start, have some lunch and then decide on your afternoons activity: The Classic Route involves riding back up L'Alpe d'Huez for a second time, this time without interruption from revellers. We then suggest you venture beyond the ski station, through the Alpine meadows to Lac Besson, where only the squeal of Marmots disrupts the serenity of the mountainside.

In an attempt to distance ourselves from the crowds, the Challenge Route heads into the Écrins National Park on a beautiful narrow road to the remote village of **La Berarde**.

Classic Route:

L'Alpe d'Huez + Lac Besson (39km with 1400m ascent)

Challenge Route:

L'Alpe d'Huez + Lac Besson + La Berarde (103km with 2500m ascent)

Day 06: Croix de Fer, Mollard & La Toussuire

Bid a fond farewell to L'Alpe d'Huez and enjoy the northern balcony road over the Pas de la Confession to the vast reservoir of Lac du Verney at the start of the climb to la **Croix-de-Fer (2067m)**. The gradients are generally kind but there are a few cheeky sections, of course. However, the scenery is varied and there is a great café half way up! From the Col, you descend down into St Jean de Maurienne, where it all began 6 days ago.

Yet again there are options for those wanting more. The first detours up to the remote and beautiful **Col de Mollard (1630m)**. The second is the much feared TDF stage ending of **La Toussuire (1705m)**, which has historically always been a bit of a battle ground for the polka-dot jersey.

Classic Route:

Col de la Croix de Fer (75km, 1550m ascent)

Challenge Route:

Col de la Croix de Fer + Mollard + La Toussuire (117km, 3100m ascent)

Day 07 - Travel Back

All good things have to come to an end. We offer morning and afternoon transfers back to Geneva Airport at the times specified below.

Start (& end!)

Hotel Saint Georges, 334 rue de la Republique, 73300, St Jean de Maurienne. Tel +33 (0)479640106

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 UK regional airports as possible.

Finding flights

We recommend that you use a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It is particularly helpful if you search for 1-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available.

If you are flying long haul we strongly recommend arriving at least a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start your trip and are happy to book you into the start hotel for an additional night, or you can of course choose and book your own hotel nearby. NB: we can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

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. The start/end hotel has a car park so it is possible to leave your car there for the week.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

If you arrive earlier than the given group 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 your flight is significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to get public transport or a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your travel insurance, or to your airline.

Arrival Airport (15th July): Geneva (GVA)

Transfer time: 1hr 45 mins. Pick up @ **11:45, 15:00 and 18:30**. Please ensure your flight arrives at least 20mins prior to the transfers.

Departure Airport (22nd July): Geneva (GVA)

Transfer time: 1hr 45 mins. Drop off @ **08:30, 13:45 and 15:30** Please don't book flights leaving less than 2hrs after this or you risk missing your flight.

Direct flights between the UK and GVA that tie in with our transfers: Gatwick (EJ), Heatherow (BA / Swiss), London City (BA / Swiss), Liverpool (EJ), Manchester (EJ), Edinburgh (EJ), Bristol (EJ), Newcastle (EJ)

Navigation

You will see the van and your guides regularly so navigation does not tend to be an issue on our Classic Cols itineraries. We provide you with colour maps and altitude profiles, as well as detailed directions of where to go. Our guides will even aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions.

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

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.

Am I fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

We have created our Classic Cols range of holidays in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before. Our itinerary warms you up gently to the altitude, the extended climbing and to the technique of descending.

Our Classic Route is an achievable goal for regular cyclists who have never climbed a mountain on a bike before.

Our vehicles and guides are on hand to support you on your holiday and can offer advice, moral support and lifts in the van if you are tired.

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create on your cycling holiday an ambiance of non competitive cycling with no pressure to 'keep up' with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Am I too fit?

Have a quick peek at page 2 of this document - the week's profile of the Challenge Route. This should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our choice of routes each day, you have the opportunity to cycle all day and every day of the holiday, as you so desire, making yourself very tired indeed!

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily routes for you.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route. It can be difficult finding extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardiovascular fitness generally, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar pace to you so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable with. We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, then that is fine by us.

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 others will also be pushing themselves in preparation for their holiday. Why not share your training ideas and pre holiday plans with your holiday group on The Link...



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.

Gearing/Bikes

The climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK), but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your strength/fitness.

Most people 'get away with' a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), with the largest ring on the rear cassette having 27 teeth. If you are worried about getting up the hill then the cheapest way to get even lower gears is to change your rear cassette and chain. Campag, Shimano and SRAM produce 11 speed 32 toothed cassettes that will get you up anything! For most of these big cassettes you may need to have fitted a rear derailleur with a long reach.

You may already have a triple fitted on your bike. If so, great! You will appreciate being able to drop down to a granny gear and twiddle your way up the steeper sections.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some fabulous titanium framed bikes for hire, which are fitted out with SRAM 50-34 at the front with a 11 speed 11 - 32 toothed cassettes - perfect for our tours.

Guiding

"This trip was fabulous and made by the awesome..the small things and attention to detail really made a big difference" H Gray

Supporting you on your holiday will be 3 of our highly experienced, fun, approachable and knowledgeable guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, all guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. They will know the area, one at least will speak the language and one at least will be a bike mechanic.

Having three vehicles for the group (regardless of the number of bookings up to the maximum group size of 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace and a level of independence on this holiday. At least one van stays on the Classic Route and at least one van covers the Challenge Route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full Challenge Route may need to be more independent than the less experienced cyclists on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical (for example) there are 3 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.

You can expect to see a support van with its water, snacks and your personal day bags 3 - 6 times a day so you don't need to carry much on your bike unless the weather is exceptional!

"Just coming down to earth now after an unforgettable week of amazing scenery and new friendships made". R Bill

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to a maximum of 30 clients for this special departure. We get lots of clients booking alone, and lots of couples or small groups of friends...

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 try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

We spend the first 2 nights and the final night in the Hotel Saint Georges in Saint Jean de Maurienne. This well-appointed 3* town coach house hotel is very bike friendly with an extensive bike store and washing facilities.

The Hotel Chamois is a well situated Alpine Ski Chalet on the edge of the ski station of L'Alpe d'Huez, commanding extensive views of the Ecrens National Park to the south. Our English hosts make the place feel very homely and the sun terrace is the perfect place to relax after a good ride and to escape from the crowds. All our evening meals will be taken in hotel restaurant where the chef serves up generous portions of delicious home-cooked food and is very amenable to catering for any dietary requirements. Below the hotel is the aptly named 'Underground Pub' which is primarily aimed at revelling skiers in the winter but with multiple TVs and a good range of cool beers, this will be a great place to keep up-to-date with the Tour during our stay. There are lots of shops, bars, cafes in L'Alpe d'Huez and the large open air swimming pool is just a stone's throw away.

There isn't a huge number of hotels in L'Alpe d'Huez and with half a million people due to descend on the mountain, beds are in hot demand. This is reflected in the increased cost of this TdF Special but what an opportunity for all us TdF fanatics! This, plus the usual awesome level of Marmot on- and off-road support we know you'll be glad you joined us!

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. Most hotels 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. We strongly advise that you stop for 'proper' food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and they appreciate your custom. We 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. 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.

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 every night, including the last celebratory evening. Coffees/soft drinks and beers are not included (we'd be broke!)

Special diets

Please contact us with any special dietary requirements. The French find it notoriously difficult to understand vegetarianism, but we have worked with our hotels to improve this. 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.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours trips. Anyone without insurance will be unable 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 and VAT. For full spec and dimensions, please see 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. Register on, or Log In to The Link to book your holiday and pay your £200 deposit online by credit/debit card, or find bank details for a transfer
4. Receive an email from Kate with confirmation of your booking
5. Watch out for regular information being posted to your holiday folder on The Link; a guide to your holiday, GPS files, packing lists etc
6. Optionally meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link and share training / travel plans etc

