

Raid Alpine (Nice to Geneva)

763km road cycling challenge from Nice to the shores of Lake Geneva,
over 31 cols with 18,450m ascent

Summary

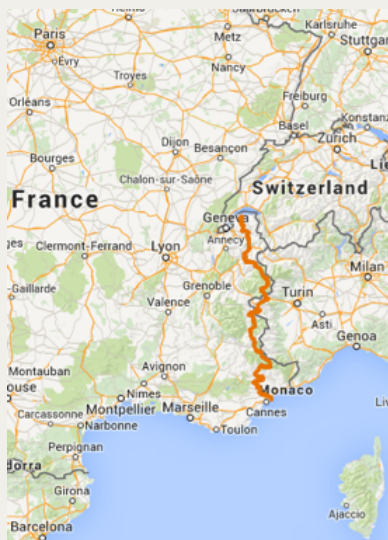
WHERE: French Alps

DISTANCE: 763km

TIME : 6 days cycling

PRICE : see website

DATES: June



The Raid Alpine (Nice to Geneva)

The stats for this journey are suitably impressive: 763km and 31 cols giving you over 18,450m of ascent! Those who have already done the Raid Alpine in the other direction confirm that this original route is the harder one! With some incredible scenery shifts, you cycle up through the rough gorges of the Southern Alps before taking on the south side of the highest 'col' in Europe, the Cime de la Bonette. It's a mighty one to have under your belt on day 2 of the challenge and other great names await: Col d'Izoard and the Col de l'Iseran, to name drop but a few.

This is the heart of the French Alps and the views don't get any better. Each col has its own character and will stay in your memory as the bit of route with the 'best view', 'the steepest hairpin', 'the most belligerent cow!' The final descent from the Col de Moises to the expansive shores of Lake Geneva is enjoyable in every way: for the freewheel, for the views and for the satisfaction of completing this great achievement. Successful raiders receive a certificate and medal from the cycle club in Thonon Les Bains.

The Raid Alpine is a cycling challenge, but it is also your holiday. Marmot Tours has been supporting clients on our Raid challenges for over 15 years 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...

Highlights

Traverse the French Alps from south to north

Infamous TdF passes including the Iseran, Izoard and Cime de la Bonette

Official route, carnet and certificate & medal for successful finishers



Your Raid Route

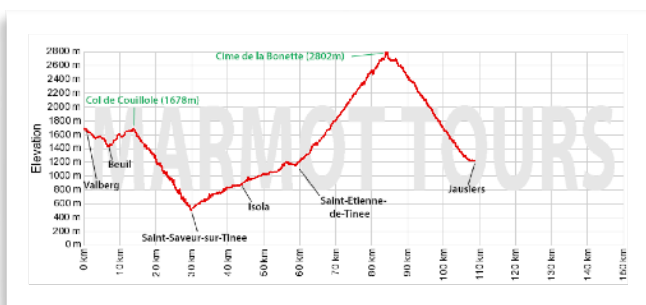
Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Nice Airport to the start hotel (10 min). Meet your guides, assemble and test out your bikes and come along to the welcome briefing followed by a good dinner.

Day 1 - Nice to Valberg 147KM WITH 3450M ASCENT

Turn your back on the Mediterranean and head into the urban sprawl of the coastal 'plain'. There is nothing flat here as you climb up (steeply in parts) past luxury penthouse apartments to the perfume capital of Grasse. After 45km you reach St-Vallier-de-Thiey where you turn off the main roads and head into the mountains. The contrast is striking as you enter this deserted, shrubby landscape over several cols and into stunning deep gorges.

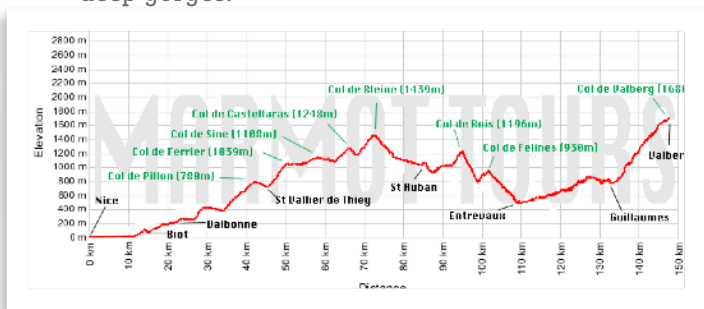
must come down so after a great descent you end up back down at 500m.



Next up is the highest col in Europe, the Cime de la Bonette (2802m) - a whopping 2200m of climbing over 54km! There is no need to mention the amazing views and the sense of achievement in bagging this climb is overwhelming. Once at the top all that is left to do is roll downhill to our hotel in Jausiers.

Day 3 - Jausiers to Cesana Torinese 137KM WITH 3650M ASCENT

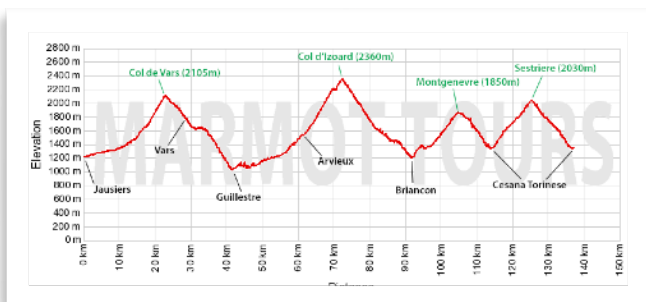
Today is a really big day out - but it is also a great one! You start by climbing over the Col de Vars (2111m) to Guillestre. From here you head up the stunning gorge into the Queyras National Park and up the infamous Col d'Izoard (2361m), with its monuments to Fausto Coppi and Louison Bobet. Yet another great downhill to Briançon - a town well worth visiting, despite the gradient of the high street! The final climb of the day is the Col de Montgenèvre (1854m), which takes you over the border into Italy. It's then downhill all the way to the small town of Cesana Torinese where you cycle straight past the hotel (how much do you want the medal?) and take on the Colle del Sestriere (2030m) for a 'tampon' before returning to the hotel in Cesana.



The most notable col is the Col de Bleine (1439m), which, given that you started at sea level, is to be respected! A few more 'steep' undulations on a narrow road take you to the spectacular fortified town of Entrevaux. It is worth lingering here for a bit before taking on the stunning, cliff hugging road up the Gorges de Daluis. Dig deep for the Col de Valberg (1672m) which takes you to your hotel.

Day 2 - Valberg to Jausiers 109KM WITH 2650M ASCENT

A gentle start though the lush meadows takes you to the Col de la Couillole (1678m). What goes up

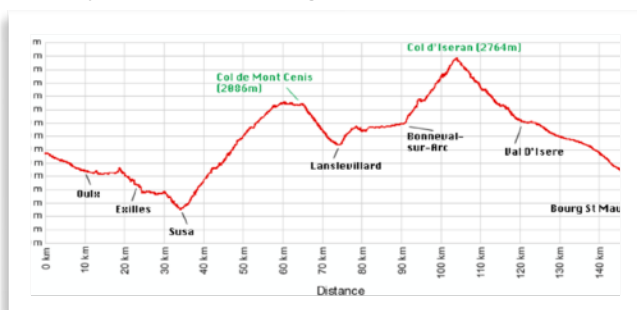


NB: The official route was amended to go over the Col de Finestre and Col de Sestriere thus avoiding a section of main road from Cesana to Susa. However, the first 8km of the Col de Finestre is unsurfaced and unsuitable for road bikes so we have opted to stick to the original route, but taking in the obligatory 'control' by riding up the Col de Sestriere from the east.

Day 4 - Cesana to Bourg-St-Maurice 153KM WITH 3100M ASCENT

Enjoy a big breakfast today, as you start with a long, gentle descent into the town of Susa. 'Up' is the only way of describing the next few hours as you take on the Col du Mont-Cenis (2081m) from the tough side! There is a very welcoming café on the Col for refuelling before you head back into France and up the valley to the 'chocolate box' village of Bonneval.

Next up is the 2nd highest col in Europe - Col de l'Iseran (2764m). There is no doubt that you are doing it from the most picturesque side, but unfortunately this does not make it any easier! The views from the top are magnificent and there is something humbling in the knowledge that you were down at 500m earlier in the day! Thankfully all you have left to do at this stage is to roll down the hill through Val d'Isère, down the valley and on to your hotel in Bourg-St-Maurice.

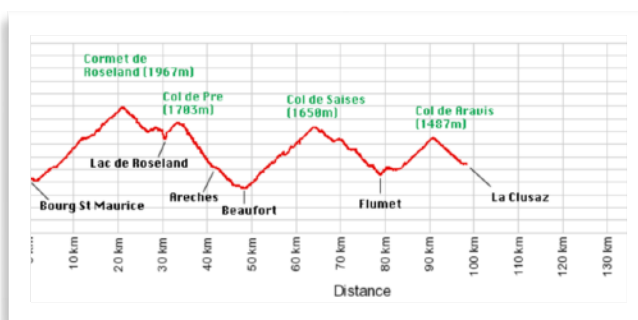


Day 5 - Bourg-St-Maurice to La Clusaz 98KM WITH 3090M ASCENT

You start off the day with the Cormet de Roselend (1968m), where you will probably be greeted by a man selling the famous local cheese (Beaufort)! You are now in the green heart of the Alps and after a rare moment of 'flat' around the reservoir, the Col du Pré (1740m) is barely noticeable.

The descent, on the other hand, requires all your concentration as it is not much more than a tarmacked farm track winding its way down the mountainside. Beaufort is a charming town, but don't get too relaxed as you still have a 'fair' amount of climbing to get out of the way, namely

the Col de Saisies (1633m) and Col des Aravis (1487m). The Aravis is followed by a nice descent down to the thriving ski town of La Clusaz, where



you stay the night.

Day 6 - La Clusaz to Thonon-les-Bains 119KM WITH 2500M ASCENT

Don't worry if your legs don't work so well first thing – it is to be expected at this stage of the ride! You descend out of La Clusaz and down to the base of the mighty Col de la Colombière (1618m), the 'main event' of the day. Drop down the other side and 'undulate with an uphill bias' along to Taninges - it is then time to go up, and up it certainly goes! The Col de Ramaz (1557m) is not particularly high, but from the southeast it is extremely steep, making it the most challenging col of our trip.

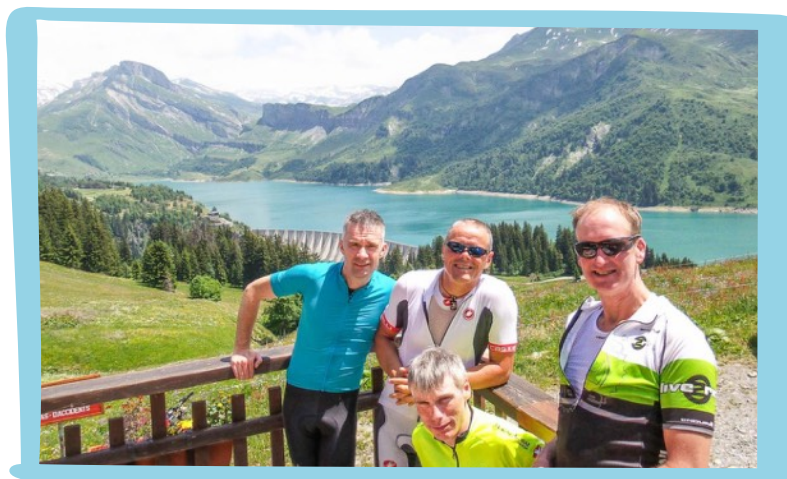
Once over the top of the Ramaz, things change. From here you can begin to relax a bit and enjoy the beautiful Alpine countryside and floral meadows. The Col de Jambaz (1027m) and Col de Terramont (1080m) are mild inconveniences on your way to the Col des Moises (1118m). Although not particularly high, the views over Lake Geneva are stunning and the knowledge



that it is downhill all the way to its shores is bound to put a smile on your face.

Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer transfers from the hotel to Geneva Airport (1hr) at specific times - please see our travel section for more details.



Start & End

Start: Novotel Nice Airport Cap 3000, 40 Avenue de Verdun, 06700 St Laurent du Var, Nice (+33 4 93 19 55 55)

End: Hotel Côte Sud Léman, 6 Rue du Pamphiot, 74200 Thonon-les-Bains (+33 4 50 70 36 70)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to NCE'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving into Nice a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. 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.

Please arrange to arrive at the start hotel for 17:30 at the latest on the Travel Day so you can be

there for the welcome briefing. Our start hotel is conveniently located close to the airport and offers an airport shuttle service.

Geneva has a left luggage service, useful if you have a late return flight and would like to explore the city.

Foreign Travel Advice

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

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times 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.

Transfers from **Nice airport (NCE)** at the start of the trip (10min) and at set times from the end hotel in Thonon-les-Bains back to **Geneva airport (GVA)** (1 hr) are included in the holiday price.

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 take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

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 and as you will see the van and guides regularly, navigation does not tend to be a problem.

For those of you with GPS units, we have GPS files available and will post them on The Link a few weeks before departure, in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. 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.

Am I fit Enough?

It is possible (or even 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 cold light of day it is only right to 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, so please make sure this trip is right for you before you book.

Many of our riders are club cyclists, 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 our Raid routes. 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 is pacing yourself. We are very keen to emphasise that you don't need to be cycling super fast in order to manage the daily route. The joy of a Marmot Raid is that from the group of around 20 riders you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner, friend or room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you

feel comfortable going. Two guides in support vehicles will support your every need, be it mechanical, nutritional or motivational!

Training

This is a holiday that requires training. 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 group banter. It can be difficult finding extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your stamina and comfort in doing long daily distances you will really benefit when it comes to the Raid itself. Feel free to use the Link Forum if you would like to share your training plans with your group or meet other riders local to you pre-trip.

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 many of the same climbs but there is ultimate flexibility on the holiday as you have options and can choose each day between 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, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Alps, Slovenia, Dolomites, Picos, Catalonia, Andalusia, Corsica and Sardinia.

How does it compare?

This is a fabulous 'sister' Raid to the Raid Pyrenean if you have done that and are looking for the next challenge. The Raid Alpine in either direction (we have a N-S version too), is 6 days in the saddle, which is not to be underestimated. To have some experience of consecutive days of riding would be sensible.

In terms of choosing between the N- S and S-N version of this challenge, the client feedback is that this version is a little harder. South to north is the original direction that the Raid Alpine was first undertaken in, as Georges Rossini, the route creator intended it.

Overall the average daily distance comes in at 130km and the daily average ascent is 3130m.

For those of you who are first time Raiders, we would recommend doing the shorter Raid Pyrenean, or the slightly easier Raid Alpine N-S before attempting this Raid.

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. 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 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 stay in a selection of 2 and 3* hotels with ensuite 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 (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. Expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Most Alpine hotels offer eggs, cheese & meats for your protein kick start too.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others 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 the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), 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

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three 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, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's Included

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- Raid Alpine registration, certificate and medal for successful Raiders
- 7 nights half board accommodation including wine at dinner
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water
- 750ml Marmot Tours water bottle and a Marmot Tours Velopac to keep your phone/cards/cash safe during your ride



Guiding

“A quick note to say you organised a wonderful, exceptional and memorable tour... Thank you”
Marca W

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace and with a level of independence on this holiday. It also means that wherever you are in the group (front, back or in-between), you will have access to your personal kit, snacks, water and any mechanical or first aid support. In the event of you needing help for a mechanical (for example) one of the vans 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 water, snacks and your personal day bag 3 - 6 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

A note to speedy cyclists who don't like stopping: Let us know so we can plan with you how to balance your needs against those of others in the group, in order for you to have utmost flexibility regarding pacing etc. If you think you are going to be very fast, please contact us to talk about this and what we can offer you as someone way ahead of others in the group.

“The organisation was impeccable as ever and we really enjoyed it. You guys are the best at what you do.” John O'B

Strava

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

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.

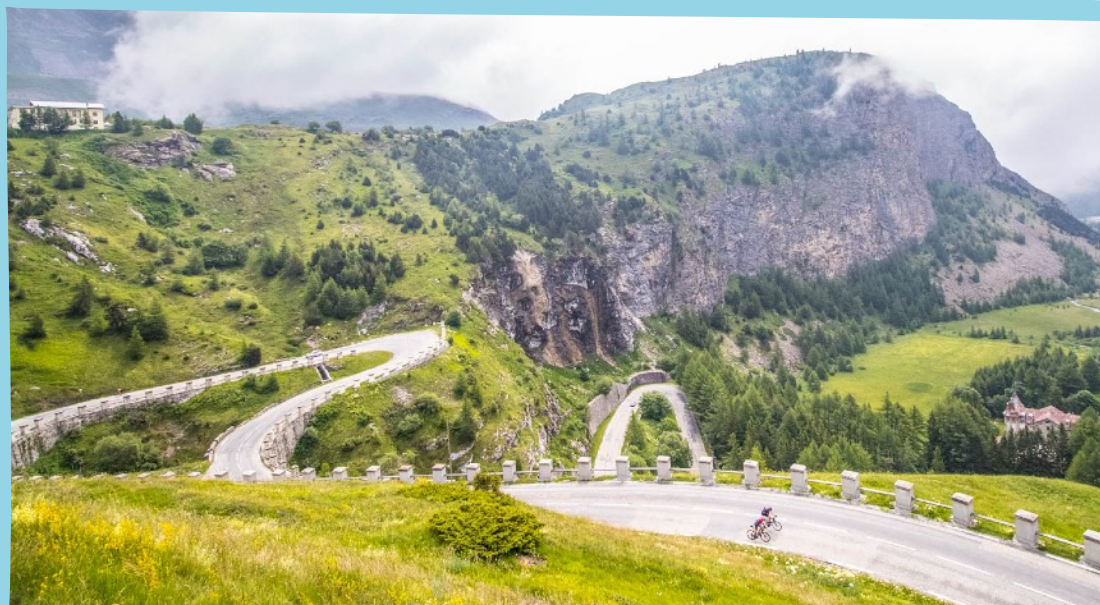
We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to focus on the road at all times.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, 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 level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.



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

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our [cancellation policy](#).

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude 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.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

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.

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).

