

Alpine Highlights Minibreak

Explore the highlights of the Alps including some of the most famous TdF classics

Summary

WHERE: French Alps
DISTANCE: To suit you
TIME : 3.5 days
PRICE : see website
DATES: June



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With so many ‘bucket list’ climbs and beautiful, gravity-defying roads snaking their way up the high Alpine pastures, this short road cycling holiday explores the small area many consider the best place to ride your bike in Europe.

Your ‘playlist’ for these few days is an emotion-stirring line up of non-stop TdF classics, including the Alp d’Huez, Galibier, Lacets de Montvernier, Madeleine, Croix de Fer, La Toussuire, Chaussy and Télégraphe.

Incidentally, this cycling holiday includes all the climbs of the La Marmotte sportive, so it is an excellent opportunity to ride the route, but at a more leisurely pace, and over two days.

As with our other Classic Cols style holidays, there is lots of flexibility and you can ride as much or little as you like to make this short break your own. Whether you opt for the Classic or Challenge route (or a mix of the two), you’re sure to enjoy yourself, ticking off a few must-do bucket climbs as you go along, supported by two of our fabulous guides in vans, who take care of your every need.

If you like the look of the Minibreak but would like to have a few more days on the bike, we also run week long Classic Cols holidays in the Pyrenees, Alps Corsica, Sardinia, Picos, Cevennes & Ardeche, Provence, Andalusia and Catalonia too: for cyclists new to the mountains, looking at doing the classic route, we recommend starting with the Pyrenees.

Highlights

Flexible itinerary to suit everyone

Short and sweet, filled with the best TdF bucket list climbs

TdF Classics incl. L’Alpe d’Huez, Lacets de Montvernier, Galibier, Madeleine, Croix de Fer and more

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers from Geneva GVA airport (1hr 30min) to your hotel in St-Jean-de Maurienne. Meet your guides, assemble your bikes and have a welcome briefing and wholesome dinner.

Those on the morning transfer will have the opportunity to warm up the legs with a ride up to the ski station and Tour de France stage ending of La Toussuire (1702m).

Classic Route

La Toussuire [35km with 1150m ascent]

Day 1: Montvernier, Chaussy and 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 du Chaussy (1533m)** which is a 'characterful' climb with spectacular views - hopefully these will ease the pain of the few punchy sections!



Following a nice lunch, retiring back to the hotel is a good option, but for those with energy left to burn, you might like to take on the mighty **Col de la Madeleine (2000m)**.

Classic Route

Montvernier + Chaussy [47km with 1200m ascent]

Challenge Route

Montvernier + Chaussy + Madeleine [76km with 2350m ascent]

Day 2: Télégraphe & Galibier

Your main objective today is the **Col du Galibier (2642m)**. 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 **Alpine Highlights Minibreak**

Col du Télégraphe (1566m). After a little respite in the ski station of Valloire, you continue through open moorland and spectacular mountain scenery to the Col. This is quite a special place oozing with TdF history. You will be pleased to hear that it's 'down' for the rest of the day to the charming resort of La Grave ... that is unless you opt for the Challenge route, which involves descending to the **Col du Lautaret** and back up the **Col du Galibier (2642m)** from the South to ensure you make the most out of this mighty mountain.

Classic Route

Télégraphe + Galibier [68km with 2290m ascent]

Challenge Route

Télégraphe + Galibier N & S [85km with 2880m ascent]

Easier Option

Lift up the Télégraphe [43km with 1230m ascent]

Day 3: L'Alpe d'Huez & Croix de Fer

Riding a road bike up the 21 bends to the ski station of the **Alpe d'Huez (1845m)** is a genuinely emotional experience. The road climbs steeply, and you quickly gain awe-inspiring views, but it is the TdF history that makes this climb unique. With the orange-stained tarmac of Dutch Corner and the names of cycling heroes painted on the road, you cannot escape it - here you are, riding your bike in the same arena as the TdF legends. It is hard not to give this climb everything you have!

This 13.9km long 1118m climb is not everyone's idea of fun, so those who want a more leisurely day can skip it and enjoy the climb to the **Col de la Croix-de-Fer (2067m)**. This is one of our favourite cycling climbs in the French Alps, with reservoirs, alpine pastures and great views. The Col is adorned with a great cafe, making it the perfect place to savour the moment with an ice cream before descending (mostly) down to St Jean de Maurienne.

Today's ride is a fabulous grand finale to three exceptional days on the road bike.

Classic Route

Croix de Fer [95km with 1720m ascent]

Challenge Route

L'Alpe d'Huez + Croix de Fer [118km with 2870m ascent]

Day 4: Travel Back

We offer included transfers back to Geneva airport - read on for travel details.



Hotel Start & End

Hotel Saint-Georges, 334 rue de la République,
73300 St-Jean-de-Maurienne, France
(+33 479 640 106)

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 GVA'. 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 in Geneva a day early to help you acclimatise to the new time zone 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, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

If you are planning on driving to the start hotel, you will be able to park your car there for the duration of your holiday.

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 at set times from and to **Geneva airport (GVA)** are included in the holiday price. The transfer from Geneva airport to St-Jean-de-Maurienne takes about 1.5hrs.

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 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 a range of daily options on this holiday in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before.

Our easier options are an achievable goal for regular and fit 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 an ambience 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?

We have designed our Alpine Minibreak to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the hardest route option 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.

If you ride the hardest option each day then you are looking at 314km with about 9250m of ascent during your 3.5 days of riding.

What is so nice about this holiday 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 to find 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 cardio vascular fitness overall, 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 speed 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 going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.



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.

Guiding

"Excellent - Very well organised and riders of all abilities are well cared for." Ray H

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 with a level of independence on this holiday. Your guides will choose the best general direction/route to be done each day, based on the weather conditions and then you can make your choice as to which route option to go for.

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 issue (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 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

"Excellent - I daren't look elsewhere when booking a cycle tour." Richard B

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

You stay in comfortable 3* hotels in the centre of St Jean de Maurienne and one night in La Grave. The hotels have a great attitude towards cyclists and know us and our needs well. A massage service is available at the St Georges and there is a sizeable open-air swimming pool in St Jean de Maurienne. The hotel Castillan in La Grave has a swimming pool.

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). The hotel has a secure outbuilding for bike storage 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 with cheese, eggs & 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 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?

- 3.5 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- 4 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



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).

