

Ventoux 'Club des Cinglés' Challenge

Climb the iconic 'Giant of Provence' once, twice or 3 times if you want to take on the Club de Cinglés de Mont Ventoux Challenge: 136km with 4443m ascent!

Summary

WHERE: Provence
DISTANCE: flexible
TIME: 2.5 days
PRICE: see website
DATES: September



Highlights

Official 1 day Cinglés Challenge: all 3 climbs

2 days of cycling: choosing best weather for the challenge and ride a route around base of Ventoux on the other day

Exceptional support from 2 guides in customised vans for your best chance of success



Ventoux Challenge

The 'Club des Cinglés du Mont Ventoux' translates as the 'Brotherhood of the Ventoux Nutters' - very apt for anyone that cycles up Mont Ventoux 3 times in a day!

Ventoux is an iconic Tour de France climb, made infamous the world over when it claimed the life of British rider Tom Simpson in 1967 and since becoming a Mecca for cyclists from all over the world wanting to battle the elements up this arid, rocky landscape.

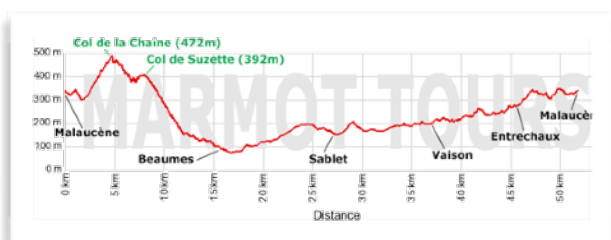
Situated in a beautiful part of Provence, you will benefit from a half day warm up ride on the travel day and then a beautiful circuit around the base of the mountain with optional extras depending on how far you want to go (see itinerary for details). This opens this trip up to those who may be keen to cycle once or twice up Ventoux but don't want to do the Club des Cinglés challenge. The circuit will be done the day before the Club des Cinglés Challenge on Day 2, however, if the weather is looking great on Day 1 and not so good for Day 2 then the guides will make a judgement call on which route is done when.

We spend 3 nights based in the vibrant town of Malaucène, where our 3* hotel provides us with a warm welcome and secluded surroundings with a pool. As a centre based trip, exceptionally, we have opened this trip up to non-cycling partners who may want a couple of days of R & R whilst their partner 'beasts themselves' up Ventoux! Read on for more info...

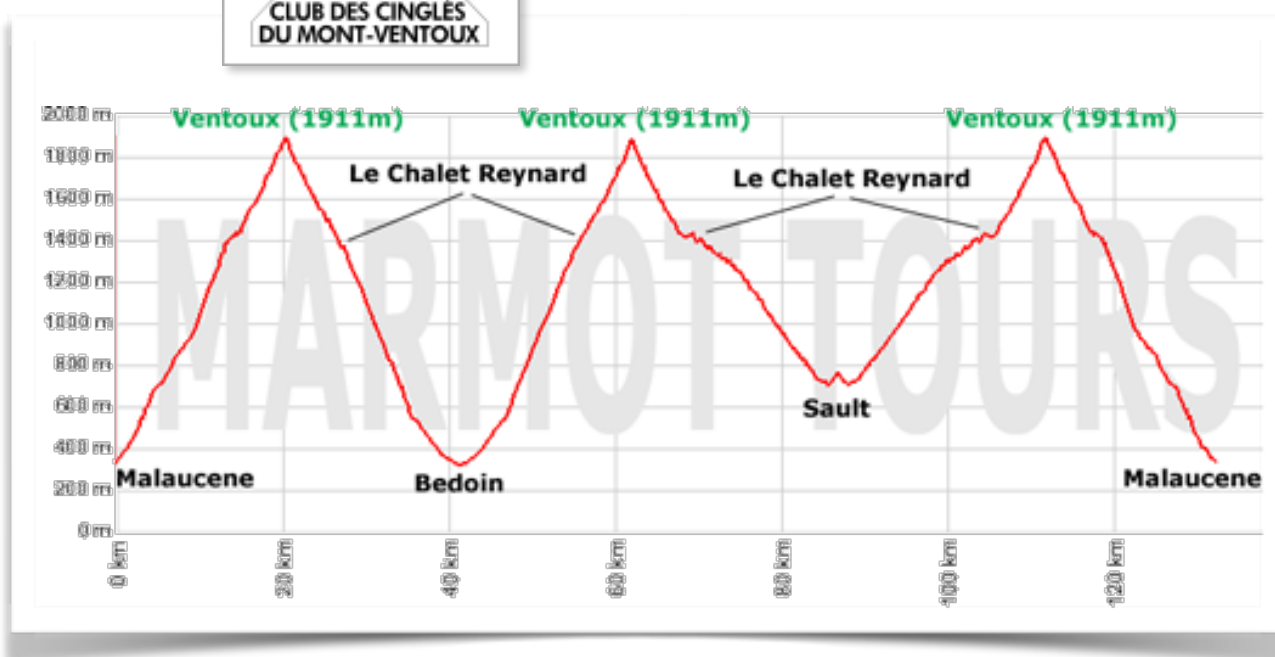
Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Marseille Airport to Malaucène (1hr 30min), our base for the holiday. It is well situated at the foot of the climb but is also a pleasant town with a great bike shop! Today is not just about getting to the start hotel however. For those arriving in the morning, after meeting your guides and assembling bikes, there is plenty of time for a warm up ride (52km and 700m ascent). The hills to the west of Malaucène are perfectly placed to test your bike and warm up the legs.



The route takes you up the Col de La Chaîne (472m), through vineyards and isolated hamlets - rural France at its best. After a nice descent you climb gently back to Malaucène via the fortified town of Vaison-la-Romaine



Day 1: Club de Cinglés du Mont Ventoux Challenge

136KM WITH 4443M ASCENT

Today is going to be a day to remember and whether you decide to climb Ventoux once, twice or all 3 ascents, you will enjoy a great sense of achievement.

For those taking on all 3 climbs, The Club de Cinglés Challenge rules are fairly simple: ride all 3 roads up Mt Ventoux (1911m) in a single day and get your 'route card' stamped in the towns at the base and the gift shop on top.

The 'jury is out' as to whether the Malaucène or Bédoin ascent is toughest, but there is no doubt that the climb from Sault is the 'easiest', so we will attempt this last.

With 2 guides in our customised vans we will be on hand to offer great support (water, snacks, mechanical input, moral support/distraction from the pain!) regardless of your speed and we would like to point out that there is no pressure to complete the challenge. Good luck and enjoy!

NB: Should the weather on Day 1 be poor then your guides may postpone the challenge until Day 2.

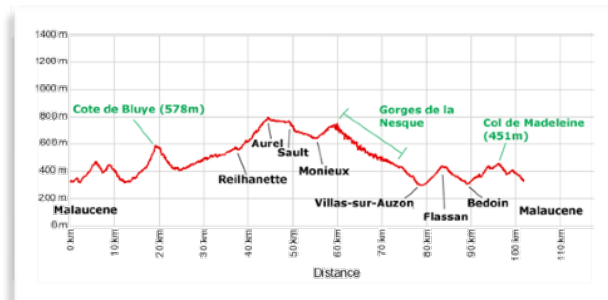


Day 2 - Circuit around Ventoux

Given that this holiday is all about Ventoux it is fitting to cycle around the base of the mountain as well as climbing up it. Provence is amazing for cycling, with an extensive network of quiet roads, pretty villages, diverse forests, deep gorges and some cheeky little climbs - today's ride has a bit of everything...

There are 2 variants of the route, so you can get what you want from the day and customise this trip to you.

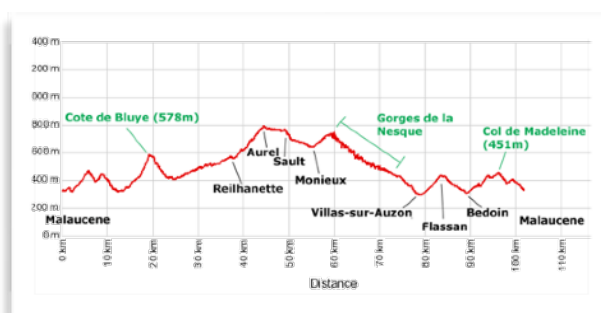
Option 1: 103km with 1400m ascent



Sticking to the surfaced road that hugs the flanks of the mighty mountain, you undulate over several un-named cols before climbing up the Côte de Bluye (578m).

Here you are teased (tormented?) by stunning views of the weather station on top of Ventoux - way above you! Stop for a coffee in the pretty village of Sault before you pick up a narrow road that hugs the cliffs of the Gorges de la Nesque. Enjoy a fantastic descent and undulations to Bédoin before nipping over the fairly insignificant Col de la Madeleine (451m).

Option 2: 122km with 1900m ascent



If you think you might want a little more than Option 1, then branch off from the main route at Montbrun les Bains and climb up the Col de l'Homme Mort (1213m), this is a very pleasant climb with great views of the 'Giant of Provence', taking in the Col de Macuègne (1068m) en route. It sets you up for a great descent into Sault, where you rejoin the route for Option 1.



Hotel/Accommodation

We stay in the beautiful 3* [Hotel Ventoux Provence](#) on the outskirts of Malaucène. A former silk farm, it has been tastefully converted to offer comfortable facilities in its own parkland, with a nice outdoor 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).

Travel

Marmot Tours offers 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.

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 1-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg 'UK to Marseille'.

NB: Search results may change as more airlines release their schedules for summer/autumn the following year.

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 flying long haul, we recommend arriving at least a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start your trip. We are

happy to book you into the start hotel for an additional night, though it is generally better value for you to book yourself via a site like booking.com as we don't get preferential rates and have to charge an admin fee of £25 per booking.

NB: we can generally only offer airport transfers 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.

Foreign Travel Advice

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

Airport Transfers

Transfers from and to Marseille Airport (MRS) are included in the holiday price. The transfer time between MRS and Malaucène is around 1hr 30min.

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.

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 by email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk



Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. We're in France, so expect continental style breakfasts that we supplement with Dorset cereals and fruit. Breakfast on the day of the challenge will be at 06:45

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 but we strongly advise that you stop for 'proper' food at lunchtimes. There is a cafe at the top of Ventoux (though it can be a bit windswept), so the Chalet Reynard around 6km from the top will be a prime location for lunch and a 'van faff'. Obviously there are lots of other cafés too around the base... this area is a Mecca for cyclists so finding suitable food will not be an issue.

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: fruity seed 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 courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19.30. Up to half bottle of wine at dinner

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

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. We can cater for most dietary needs / allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we need clients to firmly be either vegetarian/vegan for the trip or not - the hotels (and guides) find it hard if clients are vegetarian for some meals and not for others. Coeliacs 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.

What's Included?

- 2.5 days supported riding
- Airport transfers at specified times
- Route notes/directions/maps/GPS files
- Club des Cinglés registration, certificate & medal for successful finishers
- 3 nights half board accommodation & table wine at dinner
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering nutritional, moral, mechanical and first aid support, plus snacks & water
- 750ml Marmot Tours water bottle and a Marmot Tours Velopac

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 an issue. 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 and are updated regularly.

Group Dynamics

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

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

Am I fit Enough?

It is possible (some would say probable) that the seed of doing the Ventoux Challenge was planted in your mind when you had a drink in hand, chatting with mates. In the cold light of day it is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough to take it on! Remember that of course you can just climb Ventoux once (or twice) which is momentous in itself, so this trip can be graded to a degree, to meet your level of fitness and your personal aspirations. We are there to support you in meeting your own individual goals, and having a fabulous time doing so!

However, if you are taking on the triple ascent, then this is a serious challenge with 4443m of climbing. You need to be a regular road cyclist in order to enjoy and get the most out of this trip. Having done some cyclosporives would be beneficial, so you know what to expect from a big day in the saddle and you need to have experience of cycling in the mountains.

We would expect most of the clients coming on this trip to be club cyclists or those cycling regularly every week with a good base of fitness.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are the more you can relax and enjoy the holiday.

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 cardio vascular fitness generally, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself. For those aiming for the Cinglés Challenge we would recommend that you get advice on training from a suitably qualified friend/colleague/club mate/gym instructor or personal trainer.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goal. 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 going.

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), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear. 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 out with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.



Guiding

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 between 4 - 8 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 so you can have utmost flexibility regarding pacing etc. If you think you are going to be very fast then contact us to talk about this and what we can offer you as someone way ahead of others in the group.

Can my non-cycling partner come too?

YES! We're excited to say so as our response to this question is usually "no" - our priority is to our cycling clients and most of our point to point itineraries do not lend themselves well to a fun and good-value holiday for non-cyclists.

However, the very pleasant surroundings of the hotel in Malaucène, the 'centre-based' nature of this trip, and the fact that it is a mini break means that this itinerary lends itself very well to couples or friends coming along where one is a cyclist and the other is just looking for a bit of time away and a couple of days rest & relaxation.

We have therefore introduced a 'non-cyclist' trip price for this itinerary at 15% off the advertised price. Included is the same as for our cycling clients with the exception of the on-the-road support. Space in the support vans during the day is not an option as the vans need to have space available for cyclists, however, if you would like to support your cyclist on their challenge, then e-bikes are available for hire locally. If you are interested in coming along as a non-cyclist, please get in touch so we can provide you with further information and options.



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. 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 cover, 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 helps ensure we have the most up to date information and are able to quickly help in case you have an accident on your holiday.

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.

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 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. 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.

