

Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge

A wonderful, flexible cycling holiday in spring/autumn, exploring Provence, the beautiful Verdon Gorge and, of course, Ventoux!

Summary

WHERE: Provence

DISTANCE: to suit you

TIME : 6 days on the bike

PRICE : see website

DATES: May & Sep/Oct



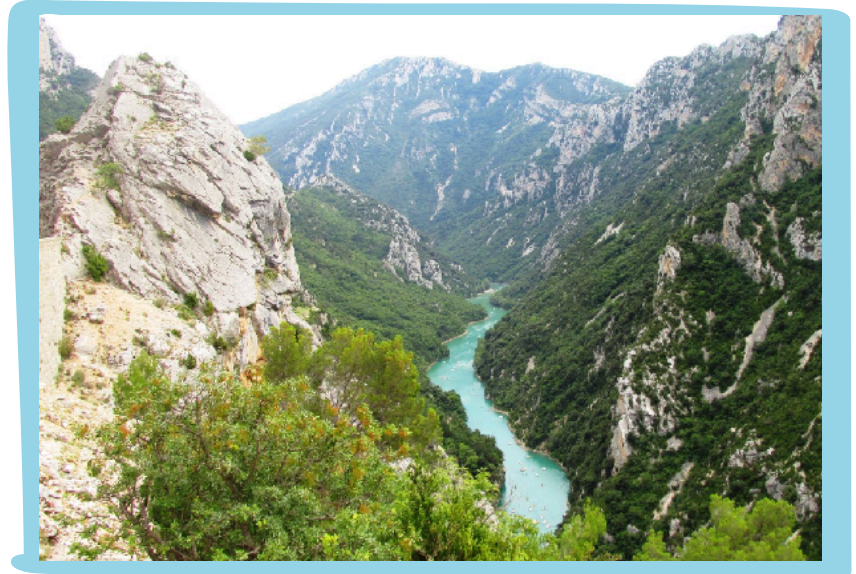
Highlights

Cycling highlights of the Provence with flexible itinerary to suit varying levels of ability

Cycle Verdon Gorge & Ventoux!

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides

Option to undertake the 'Club des Cinglés' Challenge



Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge

This flexible road cycling itinerary has been carefully crafted to give you the opportunity to cycle the best of Provence, in the South of France, during Spring and Autumn seasons, when the weather is cooler and ideal for cycling.

This is a Classic Cols style holiday, so you can expect our usual route choices, Classic or Challenge, depending on how much or little you want to be on the bike. As well as cycling the highlights of the Verdon Gorge and the ascent of Ventoux, you will also explore Provence's quieter and most beautiful routes. This holiday is ideal for mixed ability groups. Those on the Classic route can expect to cycle an average of 90km/day with about 1,400m ascent. The optional extras on the Challenge route mean an average of up to 127km/day with 2,300 ascent.

Regardless of which route you go for (perhaps a few days of either?) this week is definitely a holiday and riding on the quiet roads through the stunning mountain scenery and along the gorges is a joy. The views are far reaching and dramatic, and the sense of achievement as you summit these climbs really is incredible.

We also offer Classic Cols holidays in the Cevennes & Ardeche, Andalusia, Corsica, Sardinia, Catalonia, Slovenia, the Picos, Alps, Dolomites and the Pyrenees too, please check our [website](#) to compare.

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Marseille Airport (MRS) and Aix-en-Provence TGV to our hotel in Meyreuil (just to the east of Aix-en-Provence). This is a journey of about 30min. Assemble your bikes and depending on your arrival time, go for an exploratory spin. Welcome briefing and a great dinner will follow.

Day 1: Meyreuil to Moustiers-St-Marie

Provence is amazing for cycling, with an extensive network of quiet roads, pretty villages, diverse forests, gorges and turquoise reservoirs. Today's ride offers you a little taste of everything the area has to offer.

Looking northwards from the hotel, the horizon is dominated by the Montagne Saint-Victoire with its sheer limestone cliffs. Our route climbs to its base on a nice road with ever-increasing views. From here we enjoy a sweepy descent and start undulating our way through beautiful countryside towards our hotel in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie on the edge of the Verdon National Park.

As always, on a Marmot Tours Classic Cols Holiday, there are options for doing more cycling. Early in the day, you can detour over the Col des Portes (631m) and the Col du Grand-Sambuc (615m) via the Gorges Vauvenargues. Later, there is the option of a joyful little road that undulates its way up the Verdon river linking its many lakes. The ride can also be made easier with a tactical transfer after lunch.

Easier route

[76km with 1000m ascent]

Classic route

[107km with 1450m ascent]

Harder route

[115km with 1750m ascent]

Challenge route

[143km with 2300m ascent]

Day 2: Day Ride into the Verdon Gorge

Considered by many the most beautiful canyon in Europe, the Verdon Gorge is a real gem. The road that hugs the cliffs of the gorge is an amazing feat of engineering and today you get to appreciate every km of it! With sheer drops to the side of over 500m, big views and some sneaky climbs, today is set to be one of the most

memorable rides of your life. Warming up on the gentle slopes of the **Source de Vaumale (1202m)**, you enter the gorge proper for some stunning pedalling. Cycling doesn't really get any better than this! You leave the gorge for a short while, but only to take in some of the surrounding highlights such as the forgiving slopes of **Col d'Ayen (1031m)**, before returning again to drink your fill of magnificent gorge scenery and a fabulous descent.

Those choosing the Challenge option today head on to the incredible **Route des Crêtes du Verdon (1320m)**, for even more spectacular views.

Classic route

[89km with 1700m ascent]

Challenge route

[108km with 2300m ascent]

Day 3: Moustiers-St-Marie to Sisteron

You start today with a couple of minor undulations and a swift descent before the landscape eventually opens out to reveal wide open plains of never-ending fields of lavender and sunflowers. Dominating the horizon is the giant of Provence, Mt Ventoux, your ultimate destination. For those chasing the Challenge options, a visit to the region would not be complete without conquering Mt Ventoux's 'little sister' – the **Montagne de Lure** up at 1745m, with views to the north into the Hautes-Alpes region.

Tonight we stay in the majestic pre-Roman town of Sisteron with its narrow cobbled streets and magnificent Vauban fortifications in the shadows of the impressively ravined Rocher de la Baume mountain. With a somewhat 'flatter' (yes, it is all relative!) day of cycling behind you, we foresee arriving with plenty of time to spare, affording you the opportunity to stretch your legs and experience some local culture.

Classic route

[102km with 1100m ascent]

Challenge route

[127km with 2300m ascent]





Day 4: Sisteron to Malaucène & Vineyards of Gigondas

Today's route takes you to the pretty village of Sault via **Col de la Pigière (968m)** and **Col de Macuègne (1068m)** – drawing cyclists from far and wide for the alluring views of Ventoux.

Suitably caffeinated, you leave Sault to join a winding narrow road that hugs the cliffs of the **Gorges de la Nesque**, descending gently through a series of short tunnels hewn out of the rock. This road is one of highlights of the region and attracts cyclists and photographers from miles around for its magnificent riding and views of the valley below. Once through the gorge, a few undulations take you via Bédoin to your hotel in Malaucène. You are on holiday, but there is no escaping tough decisions: to relax by the pool, meander into the centre of town, or tag on an additional 52km in the hills to the west on the 'Gigondas' loop – taking in some beautiful vineyards and rural villages and adding 700m of ascent.

The hotel Ventoux Provence is one of our firm favourites so you are here for the next 3 nights.

Classic route

[116km with 1600m ascent]

Challenge route

[163km with 2300m ascent]

Day 5: Ride from Malaucène: Parc Regional des Baronnies Provencales

The routes outlined for days 5 & 6 are interchangeable, depending on the weather forecast. But one thing is guaranteed – you are going to have a great final two days out on your bike! The mountains to the north of Ventoux are often overlooked, but as you will discover, they are stunningly beautiful.

Our excursion into the Parc regional des Baronnies Provencales takes you over the **Côte de Bluye (578m)**, whilst the Challenge option detours early into the ride to take on the **Col du Perty (1302m)** and the **Col St-Jean (1158m)**.

Classic route

[98km with 1300m ascent]

Challenge route

[145km with 2700m ascent]

Day 6: The iconic Mont Ventoux

Mont Ventoux has featured heavily in the Tour de France world since it was first included over 60 years ago. It became infamous when it claimed the life of the British rider Tom Simpson in 1967 and has since become a Mecca for cyclists from all over the world wanting to pitch body and mind against this iconic, arid, rocky moonscape of a mountain.

We'll focus our attention this week on the most popular sides of this iconic climb, from **Bédoin** and **Sault**, descending back down to Malaucène from the summit.

The Classic route takes on the ascent from Bédoin via the **Col de Madeleine (451m)**. The Challenge route also climbs the Bédoin side, before heading back down from the summit for a second ascent up from Sault.

For tours between June and October, it is possible to do the '**Club des Cinglés de Mont Ventoux Challenge**' (Mont Ventoux 3 times in one day). Please get in touch if you're interested, at least 30 days before your trip departs. There is a registration fee of £55.

Classic route

[55km with 1730m ascent]

Challenge route

[106km with 3000m ascent]

Ventoux 'Club des Cinglés' challenge

[136km with 4443m ascent]

Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer included transfers from Malaucène back to Marseille Airport (MRS) or Aix-en-Provence TGV, a journey of about 1hr 30min - read on for more detail about your travel options.



Start & End Hotels

Start: Campanile Aix en Provence - Est, P.A Technologiques de la Sainte Victoire, 13590 Meyreuil, France (+33 442 586 969)

End: Hotel Ventoux Provence, Route du Mont Ventoux, Malaucène, France (+33 490 652 231)

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 MRS'. 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 Marseille 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, 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.

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, in this instance, train station 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 **Marseille-Provence airport (MRS)** are included in the holiday price. The transfer times are around 30min at the start of the trip and 1hr 30min at the end of the trip. We also offer free transfers from the Aix-en-Provence TGV station.

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 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 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.

Other holidays where the Classic route is considered 'easier' are the Tour of Tenerife, the Classic Cols of the Pyrenees and the Cévennes & Ardèche (although if you like to test yourself, their Challenge routes certainly pack a punch!)

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 Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route 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 daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long, making yourself very tired indeed! If you do our Challenge Route each day then you are looking at 700km with 17500m of ascent during your week, which is more climbing than on some of our Raid trips.

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 route 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

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. One van stays on the Classic route and 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 those 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 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!

"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 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 comfy 3* hotels with en suite 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. We're in France of course, so expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Some hotels offer 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

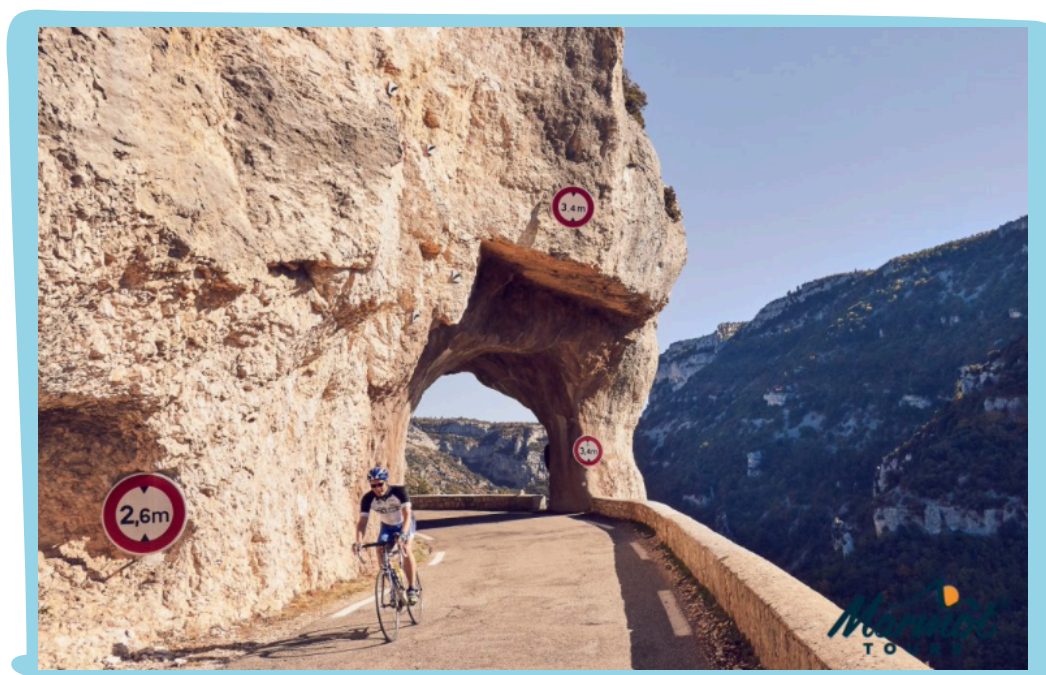
We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

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?

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- 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



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).

