

# Catalonia & Girona (Spanish Pyrenees)

Enjoy the early and late season sun, rubbing shoulders with the pros whilst exploring the amazing climbs and hidden gems of their favourite European training base

## Summary

**WHERE:** Catalonia

**DISTANCE:** to suit you

**TIME :** 6 days

**PRICE :** see website

**DATES:** May & Sep/Oct



## Catalonia & Girona (Spanish Pyrenees)

With its year-round temperate climate, laid back Catalan culture and huge variety of traffic-free mountain roads to train on, Girona has steadily become Spain's epicentre of all things cycling – so is it any wonder so many current pros hail from the region?

We start off gently to allow you to acclimatise and build up your strength. Each day there are optional extras, increasing the possible daily ascent to an average of 2420m, making this holiday also suitable for those looking to push themselves. This holiday is ideal for mixed ability groups and couples, those looking for a good challenge as well as for cyclists new to the mountains.

During this week you will discover some of the 'hidden gems' of the Vuelta including Rocacorba, Coll de Canes, Vallter 2000 and Collada de Collfred as well as getting an opportunity to spend two nights in the cycling Mecca that is Girona.

Regardless of whether you opt for the Classic or the Challenge route (or 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 coastal roads is a joy. The views are far reaching and dramatic, and the sense of achievement as you summit these climbs really is something.

We also offer Classic Cols holidays in the Alps, Picos, Dolomites and Pyrenees as well as in Andalusia, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Sardinia and Corsica - please check our website for more details.

## Highlights

**Flexible itinerary to suit everyone**

**Immerse yourself in Catalan cycling culture, enjoying early and late season sun and sea views!**

**2 nights in the cycling Mecca of Girona**

**2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides**

# Itinerary

## Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers at scheduled times from Girona GRO or Barcelona BCN airports to our start hotel in the lakeside town of Banyoles (30min).

Depending on your arrival time, you can wander into the historic town centre or head out on the bike to loosen the legs. The beautiful, yet surprisingly challenging 14km climb up towards the 12th century **Santuari de Rocacorba (960m)** is likely to have you rubbing shoulders with a pro or two. On a clear day you can see the Pyrenees to the north, which is the direction we head in tomorrow...

**Optional warm-up ride to Rocacorba**  
[29km with 850m ascent]

## Day 1: Catalan Pyrenees & Garrotxa

You leave Banyoles behind and head into the Catalan Pyrenees and the volcanic national park of the Garrotxa, twisting and turning your way up favourable gradients on the quiet and bike-friendly roads that this region is so famous for.

The diminutive **Coll de Caselles (623m)** is first on the menu today, delivering you suitably satisfied into the town of Olot for some welcome refreshment. From here on you're off into the amazing black volcanic rock landscape, riding between the now dormant volcanos and over **Coll de Capsacosta (870m)**.

Your destination for the day is the mountain hamlet of Setcases, located conveniently at the base of the famous **Vallter 2000 (2156m)** – our optional extra for the day. Vallter 2000 has featured in both the Vuelta a España and Volta a Catalunya and claims the title of 'the highest road climb in Catalonia'.

### Classic route

Coll de Caselles + Coll de Capsacosta  
[72km with 1530m ascent]

### Challenge route

Coll de Caselles + Capsacosta + Vallter 2000  
[105km with 2900m ascent]

## Day 2: Setcases to Ripoll

Being so close to the French border, it would be rude not to give those with the energy the opportunity to pop over for a visit, and all that stands in your way is the true-pass of **Col d'Ares (1513m)**.

Our 'Classic' route today bypasses the Col d'Ares and undulates over **Oix-Beget (1092m)** with a downhill bias along to the municipality of Castellfollit de la Roca, famous for its basalt cliffs and rock formations formed by centuries old volcanic lava.

You head west from here, skirting the town of Olot as you go, climbing on gentle gradients up the side of the valley to the summit of **Col de Canes (1121m)**. Having featured in both the Vuelta a España and Volta a Catalunya, this road is favoured by local riders for its lack of cars and good surface.

A flowing descent through lush green countryside leads you down to your hotel in Ripoll, a quiet Pyrenean town most famous for its Benedictine monastery and historic iron and coal mines. We recommend enjoying a relaxing afternoon by the hotel swimming pool.

**Classic route:** Oix-Beget + Col de Canes  
[96km with 1500m ascent]

**Challenge route:** Col d'Ares + Oix-Beget + Col de Canes  
[126km with 2000m ascent]

## Day 3: Ripoll to Vic

Leaving Ripoll behind you, you head out to our furthest easterly point of the week this morning, on mountain roads that get quieter and quieter as you go. Our 'Classic' route takes you over the unassuming **Coll de Merolla (1100m)** and down its sweeping tree-lined descent, before you turn left and head south again onto roads that seem to have been built especially for cyclists.

'Undulations' are the order of the day as you make your way along to **Alto de Sobremunt (889m)** and on to yet another jaw-dropping descent down onto the plains of Vic, a large depression formed over thousands of years by the river Ter and its tributaries running off the surrounding mountains.

Our 'Challenge' option today takes an early northerly detour to the summit of **Coll de la Creueta (1935m)** before re-joining the 'Classic' route.

You stay in the centre of the ancient Roman town of Vic for the night where we enjoy the serenity of our historic hotel, formally a theological college.

**Classic route:** Coll de Merolla + Alto de Sobremunt  
[93km with 1350m ascent]

**Challenge route:** Coll de la Creueta + Alto de Sobremunt  
[126km with 2300m ascent]



## Day 4: Massif del Montseny

Today you head southeast in the morning towards the Massif Montseny on tree-lined roads, the Classic route taking in the **Collada de Vilar (780m)** and **Coll de Gomara (891m)**, with the Challenge route splitting off early on to take on **Coll Formic (1144m)** and **Alto de Santa Fe (1324m)** before re-joining the Classic route.

After stopping for refreshments in the pretty town of Sant Hilari Sacalm you move into the Guilleries Massif to enjoy twisting and winding forested roads that follow a downhill bias all the way to our 4-star hotel in the centre of Girona.

There are many route options today, allowing you the flexibility to choose between time on the bike or an earlier finish. Girona is a beautiful place with a rich cycling culture, so why not head out on foot and explore the back streets and bike cafés.

**Classic route:** Collada de Vilar + Coll de Gomara [100km with 1350m ascent]

**Challenge route:** Collada de Vilar + Coll Formic + Alto de Santa Fe [135km with 2400m ascent]

## Day 5: Day ride from Girona

There are many great rides to be done from Girona, which is why the city has become such a prime cycling destination. Arguably the best climb in the region, today you have the opportunity to take on the gradients of the **Mare de Deu del Mont (1095m)**. It is a narrow, but beautiful road through the forest to the highest point around, which has been adorned with a church and the views are well worth the effort of getting there.

On the way back via Banyoles, those wanting a really tough day could detour up to the **Santuari de Rocacorba (960m)** if you did not get to do it on the arrival day.

The other option is to take a much-deserved day off the bike and explore the historic city or chill in one of the famous cycling cafés.

Tonight's dinner is not included, so that you can enjoy one of the many fine restaurants in town.

**Classic route:** First half of Mare de Deu del Mont [112km with 1500m ascent] or

Mare de Deu del Mont [128km with 2000m ascent] for all options it is possible to take a lift from Girona to save the first 19.8km

**Challenge route:** Mare de Deu del Mont + Rocacorba [148km with 2800m ascent]

## Day 6: Girona to Tossa de Mar

Cliff-hugging roads, a cool sea breeze and views that stretch for miles are all on the agenda today. You leave Girona on a road ridden by almost every cyclist in the region, to the summit of a climb that is equally popular with both amateur and professional cyclists alike, **Els Angels (475m)**. Els Angels is a steady climb, nestled in the trees for the majority, terminating at a chapel that commands dramatic panoramic views for miles around.

From here you're bound for the coast, but as always there are options. Those of you who want a slightly less challenging afternoon can choose to follow the coast road along to Tossa de Mar, whereas for the rest of you there are some spectacular climbs left to sample.

Following the Classic or Challenge routes will take you up to and over the diminutive **Romanyà de la Selva (323m)** before delivering you back to sea-level for refreshments. What lies ahead of you from here is said to be one of the prettiest stretches of coast road that the region has to offer – what better way to round off your adventure.

Those following the Challenge route head inland again from here to tick off a final two 'hills' before descending back down to take on the spectacular coast road for the final time. All that is left to do now is relax, wine, dine and share stories of a fantastic week on the bike.

**Easier route:** Els Angels + Coast Road [82km with 1150m ascent]

**Classic route:** Els Angels + Romanyà de la Selva [95km with 1400m ascent]

**Challenge route:** Els Angels + Romanyà de la Selva + Llagostera [139km with 2100m ascent]

## Day 7 - Travel Back

All good things have to come to an end. We offer transfers back to Girona (45min) or Barcelona (1h 45min) airports.



## Start & End

Hotel l'Ast: Pg. Dalmau, 63 - Ap. 74, 17820 Banyoles, Girona, Spain +34 972 58 48 79

Hotel Marina: Avda. Catalunya 27-29, 17320 Tossa de Mar, Girona. Tel +34 972 340 221

## Travel

### Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as [www.skyscanner.net](http://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 BCN or GRO'. 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 a day or so early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. If you do, you could spend time in central Girona and take a taxi to the starting hotel on the arrival day, for example. If you prefer, you can also stay an extra night at our start / end hotel, though it is generally better value for you to book yourself via a site like [booking.com](http://booking.com) as we don't get preferential rates and have to charge an admin fee of £25 per booking. 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.

[rome2rio.com](http://rome2rio.com) is an excellent reference tool to help with all your travel planning. For this trip it is worth noting that it is very easy to get from Girona to Barcelona airport by train (1hr 30min).

### 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](http://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 **Barcelona (BCN)** or **Girona (GRO)** airports are included in the holiday price and take approximately 2hrs and 1hr 45min respectively.

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](mailto: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 Classic Cols of the Pyrenees, Sardinia, Corsica, Cevennes & Ardeche and Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge, 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 779km with 14500m of ascent during your week, a comparable amount of ascent to some of our Raid itineraries. This Challenge route, to allow you to compare, is probably one of our easier Challenge routes in terms of overall ascent, so perhaps a good goal for those who normally stick to the Classic route?

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!

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

## 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 are moving on most nights and are staying in carefully selected, well-located, comfortable and cyclist-friendly hotels. These range from 2-4\* and all have en suite facilities. 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](mailto: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. All hotels have a buffet style breakfast with cereals, eggs, meats and cheeses. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Breakfast in Spain is generally from 8:30am.

### 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! Bear in mind that this is Spain, so lunches are generally served from 2pm.

### 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 20:00-20:30 (this is Spanish culture, so you may want to bring some recovery bars, etc. to keep you going until then). Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

**Please note:** There are many fine restaurants in Girona, so dinner on our second night there (at the end of day 5) is not included to give you an opportunity to choose for yourself.

### 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
- 7 nights accommodation with breakfast
- Dinner on 6 nights with table wine
- 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](mailto: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](http://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).

