

Raid Dolomites

An awe inspiring, updated route from Lake Geneva to Carnia (Venice), with incredible stats: 1,193km, 32 cols and 27,050m of ascent in all but 9 days!

Summary

WHERE: France, Switzerland and Italy
DISTANCE: 1193km
TIME : 9 days
PRICE : see website
DATES: September



Highlights

3 countries in 1 trip:
 France, Switzerland & Italy

Infamous Giro Passes
 incl. Stelvio, Giau & Zoncolan

Ride the epic Swiss Passes: Furka, Gotthard & Splügen

Dolomites National Park



Raid Dolomites (Geneva to Venice)

The Alpine Massif stretches from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic and is the most extensive and varied mountain range in Europe. Unsurprisingly, it is also home to the world's highest concentration of road cycling climbs. Peddling your lightweight road bike around the entire range has to be one of the ultimate cycling challenges. Our Raid Alpine takes you from Nice to Lake Geneva, and what we call the Raid Dolomites continues the journey through Switzerland and Italy to the corner of Austria and Slovenia.

We have crafted our Raid Dolomites route to include as many iconic climbs as possible as it crisscrosses the range in an easterly direction. Taking nine days, it is probably one of our toughest cycling holidays. Still, taken at a modest pace and with the support of our attentive and energetic guides, it is a manageable challenge for anyone who has previously enjoyed any of our other Raids.

During this incredible journey, you will experience different cultures, architecture and flavours whilst feasting your eyes on vast mountain vistas – it is a holiday after all, so we keep it fun.

Marmot Tours have been supporting clients on our Raid challenges for over 15 years and ensuring that you have a great time is what we are passionate about. You will love the ride, enjoying some great banter along the way. We leave no stone unturned in preparing for your holiday and making it the best it can be. Which is why you just have to eat, sleep and turn the pedals....

If you want to visit the Dolomites, but do not have 11 days to spare, then our Dolomites Minibreak or Classic Cols of the Dolomites & Stelvio tours with their flexible itinerary, may be the cycling holiday for you.



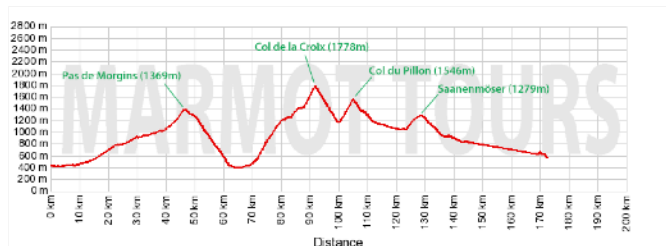
Your Raid Route

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Geneva GVA airport (1hr) to the start hotel in Thonon-les-Bains at specified times. Meet your guides, assemble and test out your bikes before joining the welcome briefing and dinner.

Day 1 - Thonon Les Bains to Spiez 173KM WITH 3070M ASCENT

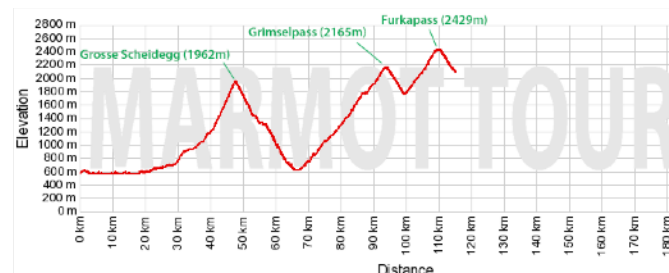
Following the customary photo overlooking Lake Geneva, your journey starts by climbing gently over the **Pas de Morgins (1369m)** and into Switzerland. The next HC climb, the **Col de la Croix (1778m)**, is no stranger to the Tour de Suisse. It starts with a series of steep switchbacks that quickly takes you through sun-drenched vineyards high up above the Rhône valley, but be warned - it has a bit of a sting at the end. This leads you to the **Col du Pillon (1546m)** and **Saanenmöser Pass (1279m)**. From here, you can enjoy 49km of mostly downhill to your hotel on the edge of Lake Thun.



Day 2 - Spiez to Furka Pass 115KM WITH 3730M ASCENT

You start the day with a delightful section of flat following the shore of Lake Thun to Interlaken. From here, you take on the **Grosse Scheidegg (1962m)** - thought by many to be the best road cycling climb in Switzerland. The road is closed to vehicles (including our support van), making this a very pleasurable climb, and the view up the glaciers to the north face of the Eiger is breathtaking.

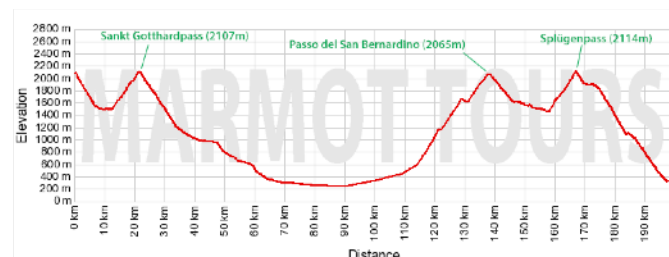
Next up is the beautiful **Grimsel Pass (2165m)**, which leads into the infamous **Furka Pass (2429m)**. Our destination is a hotel up at 2100m, affording us unrivalled views for our 2nd night in Switzerland.



Day 3- Furka Pass to Chiavenna 198KM WITH 3250M ASCENT

The Swiss are famous for their cheese and road building - fueled on the former, we experience the latter! The mythical **St Gotthard Pass (2107m)** is a road that defies gravity as it snakes through some of the most spectacular scenery in the Swiss Alps. The road was a feat of engineering only to be surpassed by the construction of a new road and tunnel, which now takes most of the traffic. The pass marks the start of a 70km descent, the first 5km of which are on smooth, well-maintained cobbles, also known as the Tremola road.

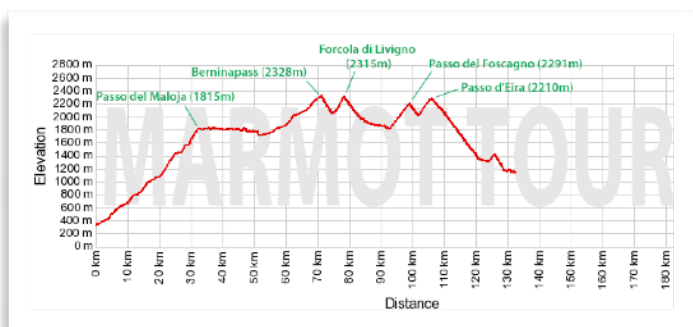
Starting at 250m ASL, the **Passo di San Bernardino (2065m)** is a significant challenge. However, as on the Gotthard, we use the old road, making it a delightful climb. The day's final challenge is the **Splügen Pass (2114m)** with its field of hairpins and abundance of marmots. Your destination is Chiavenna down in Italy, so celebrating this challenging but remarkable ride with a triple-scoop gelato would seem appropriate.





Day 4 - Chiavenna to Bormio (Cepina) 133KM WITH 3200M ASCENT

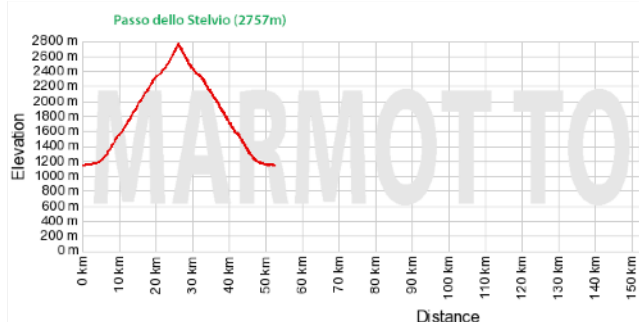
The climb to the **Passo del Maloja (1815m)** takes you back into Switzerland and onto the Engadine Plateau and the stylish resort of St Moritz. Staying high and enjoying breathtaking scenery for the rest of the day, we link four great climbs - **Bernina Pass (2328m)**, **Forcola di Livigno (2315m)**, **Passo del Foscagno (2291m)** and **Passo d'Eira (2210m)**. This spectacular ride is rounded off with a great descent to your hotel in Cepina on the outskirts of Bormio, where we spend the next two nights.



Day 5 - The Stelvio & back to Cepina 53KM WITH 1620M ASCENT

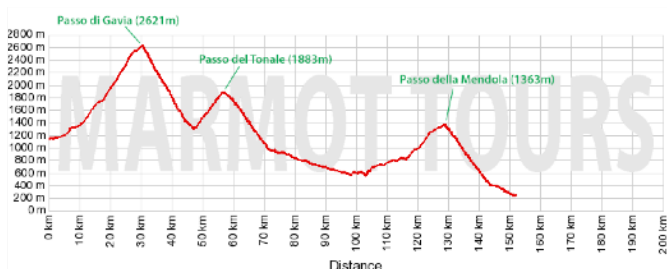
The **Passo dello Stelvio (2758m)** needs little introduction. It's a bit of a beast with many 8.5% sections and a few at 9%, so you'll be pleased to get to the top for a celebratory Bratwurst! Despite the challenges, it is one of the world's most iconic and enjoyable road-cycling climbs. It is also the highest pass on our journey, making it our Cima Coppi.

Once at the top, all you need to do is roll back to the hotel in Cepina or head into Bormio for a relaxing afternoon. You are now at the midpoint of our cycling challenge, so it seems appropriate to have a "recovery day".



Day 6 - Bormio (Cepina) to Bolzano 152KM WITH 2950M ASCENT

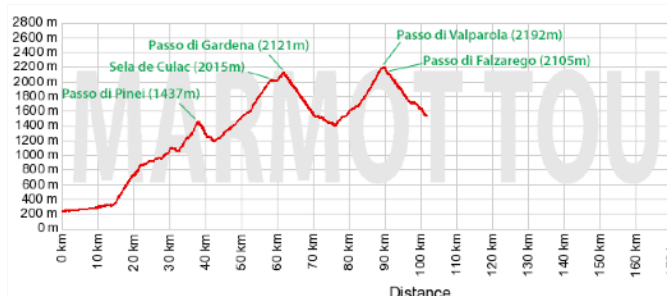
The narrow mountain road over the **Passo Gavia (2621m)** has been stirring things up in the Giro d'Italia since 1960s. It is also a fantastic climb with striking views over the glaciers of the Stelvio National Park. After quite a technical descent, you nip up the **Passo del Tonale (1883m)** into the Val di Sole. Here we join a surfaced cycle path that takes you through lush meadows and pretty villages.



Next up is the **Passo della Mendola (1363m)**, which lines you up for a roller-coaster descent into the Adige Valley and onto your hotel on the outskirts of Bolzano.

Day 7 - Bolzano to Cortina (Pocol) 102KM WITH 3070M ASCENT

There may be an uphill bias for most of the day, but you are in for another spectacular ride. Your day starts traversing Bolzano on a great, traffic-free cycle path before climbing (steeply) out of the deep valley towards the Alpe di Siusi and onto the **Passo di Pinei (1437m)**.



The towering limestone peaks, green fields and picture-perfect villages welcome you to the Dolomites, and the climb to the **Passo di Gardena (2121m)** is an excellent introduction. We then descend through Corvara and take on the northern side of the **Passo di Valparola (2192m)**. The landscape is idyllic, but there are still plenty of ruined buildings and trenches to remind us that this was the front line and the scene of a brutal battle during WW1. A fantastic descent over the **Passo di Falzarego (2105m)** takes you to our hotel above Cortina, where we spend two nights.

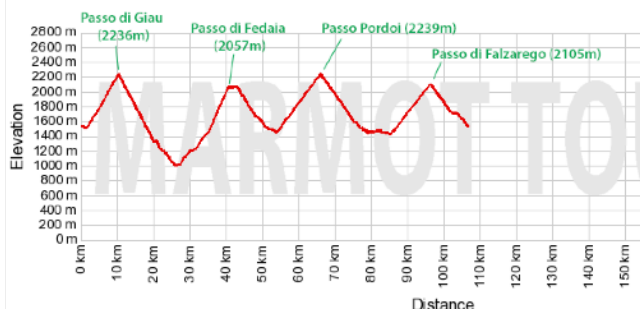


Day 8 - Highlights of the Dolomites
107KM WITH 3310M ASCENT

Raids are generally point-to-point journeys; however, the original idea was to "go and ride it all", so we feel that taking in a loop over some of the most iconic climbs in the Dolomites is justified, if not essential.

Riding the eastern side of the **Passo di Giau (2236m)** first thing in the morning is magical, and the 360-degree panorama from the top is mind-blowing. This leads nicely into the **Passo di Fedaia (2057m)** at the foot of the Marmolada glacier. This climb includes an 18% section, which is a good warm-up for tomorrow.

Heading back over to the Sella Massif, our route continues over the **Passo Pordoi (2239m)** and the **Passo di Falzarego (2105m)**. Road cycling does not get better than this!

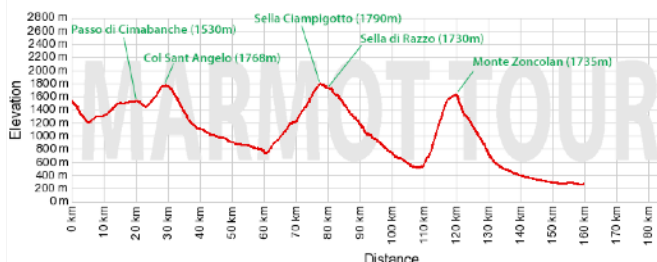


Raid Dolomites

Day 9 - Cortina (Polo) to Carnia
160KM WITH 2850M ASCENT

Today's destination is a welcoming hotel nestled in the corner of Italy, Austria and Slovenia. Here the mighty rivers that originated in the Dolomites and the Julian Alps merge and fan out onto the plain of Friuli - this seems an appropriate place to end our epic cycling traverse of the Swiss and Italian Alps.

However, that much-deserved, cold beer is 100 miles away, and there is more excellent road cycling to be enjoyed. Starting with a downhill to Cortina, we then tour Monte Cristallo over the **Passo di Cimabanche (1530m)** and **Col Sant Angelo (1768m)** to Misurina, for some great views of the towering rock pillars of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. The **Sella Ciampigotto (1790m)** marks the end of the Dolomites and the start of our grand finale - **Monte Zoncolan (1735m)**. With 10.1km averaging 11.9% (including 6km at 15%), this is a fitting climax!



Day 10 - Travel Back

We offer transfers from the hotel to Venice Marco Polo (VCE) airport (2hrs) at specified times - please see the travel section for more details.





Start & End

Start: **Hotel Côté Sud Léman**, 6 Rue de Pamphiot, 74200 Thonon-les-Bains, FR (+33 450 703 670)

End: **Hotel Carnia**, Via Canal del Ferro 28, 33010 Stazione Carnia, IT (+39 0432 978 013)

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 into Geneva a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere then do let us know and we may be able to help you with your travel plans.

Geneva has a left luggage service if you want an early drop off in order to explore the city. Please arrange to arrive at the start hotel for 18:30 at the latest on the Travel Day so you can be there for the welcome briefing.

Train from Geneva to Thonon

There are regular trains from Geneva airport to Cornavin (Geneva mainline station) taking about 6min. Change here to a bus for Geneva Eaux Vives station (www.rail.ch for details). Trains from Geneva Eaux Vives to Thonon are direct and take about 45min. You need to get a taxi from Thonon train station to the start hotel (5min).

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 Geneva airport (GVA) to the start hotel (up to 1hr), and from the end hotel to Venice Marco Polo airport (VCE) (2hrs) are included in the holiday price.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

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

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps and annotated altitude profiles as well as tailored GPS files. These will be available on The Link a few weeks before departure in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

Please note that for this particular itinerary it is essential that you have your own GPS unit. Navigation by instructions on paper is quite difficult for this itinerary, so you will be relying on your GPS. We also suggest you have a back-up navigation by uploading the routes onto the Ride with GPS phone App (instructions will be on the Link once the GPS files have been posted).

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

Am I Fit Enough?

It is possible (or even probable) that the seed of doing a Raid was planted in your mind when you had a drink in hand, chatting with mates. In the cold light of day it is only right to consider whether or not you are fit enough to take it on! All our Raid routes are challenging and you need to be a regular road cyclist in order to enjoy and get the most out of this trip, so please make sure this trip is right for you before you book.



Many of our riders are club cyclists, have done cyclosporives or some longer distance rides. However by no means all of them have, and we have had many clients who have been fairly new to road cycling (but who have a good level of fitness perhaps from a different sport) who have effectively trained for the trip and successfully completed our Raid routes. As a first Raid however, most people tend to start with the Raid Pyrenean as it is just 4.5 days in the saddle, or the Raid Alpine (Geneva to Nice), which has slightly shorter days.

Pacing

The key to success on a challenging Raid as this, is pacing yourself. We are very keen to emphasise that you don't need to be cycling super fast in order to manage the daily route. The joy of a Marmot Raid is that from the group of around 20 riders you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner, friend or room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going. Two guides in support vehicles will support your every need, be it mechanical, nutritional or motivational!

Training

This is a holiday that requires training. We want you to achieve your goals and to enjoy the whole experience. The fitter you are, the more you can relax and take note of the stunning route and throw yourself into the group banter. It can be difficult finding extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your stamina and comfort in doing long daily distances you will really benefit when it comes to the Raid itself. Feel free to use the Link Forum if you would like to share your training plans with your group or meet other riders local to you pre-trip.

If, after reading this, you really can't banish the doubt then it may be worth you looking at one of our Classic Cols style holidays as a starter. You get to climb many of the same climbs but there is ultimate flexibility on the holiday as you have options and can choose each day between a 'Classic' route, with perhaps one col a day, or the 'Challenge' route with optional extras and gruelling stage endings. We offer Classic Cols itineraries in the Dolomites, Pyrenees, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Alps, Slovenia, Picos, Catalonia, Andalusia, Corsica and Sardinia. Please see our [website](#) for a full list of destinations.

How does it compare?

The Raid Dolomites is our longest Raid, so will test your stamina, with an average daily distance of 132km and an average daily ascent of 3,006m. It is comparable to the Raid Alpine (both directions) but where it becomes really tough is that you'll be spending 9 consecutive days in the saddle, which makes it a massive endurance challenge.

Accommodation

We stay in a selection of comfy, 3 and 4* 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. Expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Some hotels offer cheese, eggs and meats for your protein kick start too.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

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

Special diets

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

What's Included?

- 9 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, maps and GPS files
- Medal for successful Raiders
- 10 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





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.

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

"The thought of 9 days was a bit intimidating but in fact proved to be the most rewarding of the Raids and felt like a real journey across Europe" C. Etchell

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

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace and with a level of independence on this holiday. It also means that wherever you are in the group (front, back or in-between), you will have access to your personal kit, snacks, water and any mechanical or first aid support. In the event of you needing help for a mechanical (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 3 - 6 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

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

"Superb organisation, great trip leaders and the hotels, food etc were wonderful. Thank you so much...no one else does it as well as you guys do!" D. Smith



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).

