

Alpine Classic Cols

Escape to the majestic scenery of the Savoie Alps and set yourself against the mighty climbs made famous by the Tour de France

Summary

WHERE: French Alps
DISTANCE: to suit you
TIME : 6 days
PRICE : see website
DATES: June to Sept



Highlights

Climb legendary TdF cols: Cormet de Roselend, Iseran, Télégraphe, Galibier, Alpe d'Huez and more

Flexible itinerary to suit everyone

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides



Alpine Classic Cols

This road cycling itinerary has been carefully crafted to give you the opportunity to cycle the most scenic and challenging cols and stage endings that the Savoie Alps have to offer. Our tantalising circular route takes in all the famous climbs that the professional Tour de France cyclists head up every year: Cormet de Roselend, Alpe d'Huez and Cols de l'Iseran, Télégraphe, Galibier, Croix-de-Fer and la Madeleine. You start off as gently as the Alps allow, gradually cranking up the daily altitude gain (1200 to 2100m). Each day there are 'optional extras' (both cols and TdF stage endings), increasing the possible daily ascent to nearer 3000m and making this holiday also suitable for those looking to really push themselves and take on our Challenge route. It is ideal for mixed ability groups.

Regardless of whether you opt for the Classic or Challenge route (or a few days of either!) this week is definitely a holiday and riding through the stunning mountain scenery of the Alps is a real joy. The views are far reaching and dramatic, and the sense of achievement as you summit these climbs will stay with you.

We offer Classic Cols style holidays in many different mountain ranges, please check our [website](#) for more details. For cyclists new to the mountains we recommend starting with the Pyrenean Classic Cols holiday as opposed to the Alpine Classic Route, which involves a little more ascent each day.

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers from Geneva airport to Albertville (1hr 30min). Meet your guides, assemble your bikes and have a welcome briefing and great dinner.

Day 1: Albertville to Bourg-Saint-Maurice

This area of the Savoie is quintessentially Alpine: lush pastures, pretty villages and surprisingly quiet roads. You start your day following the river Doron to the beautiful market town of Beaufort for a coffee and cake. Enjoy a slight change of tempo as you climb up through the forest to the breathtakingly beautiful Lac de Roselend and a well positioned restaurant that makes the most of the vista, as well as serving some classic Alpine dishes!

The final 7km of the **Cormet de Roselend (1967m)** climb is a delight and your effort is rewarded by views over towards Italy and the chance to taste some of the world renowned cheese (Beaufort) that is produced in the area. From here you descend to our hotel in Bourg St Maurice. Those wanting a bit extra could make their way up to the Italian border and the legendary **Col de Petit St Bernard (2188m)** - a climb with nothing 'petit' about it! If I mention that this is where the original 'The Italian Job' film was shot, will you end up humming the tune all the way up?

Classic Route

Cormet de Roselend [62km with 1650m ascent]

Challenge Route

Cormet de Roselend + Col de Petit St Bernard [124km with 3000m ascent]

Day 2: Bourg-St-Maurice to Lanslebourg-Mt-Cenis

Today you take on one of the mighty cols of the Alps: the savage (50km ascent!) **Col de l'Iseran (2764m)**. The first part of the climb from Bourg St Maurice up to Val-d'Isère is on a fairly busy road but the cars soon give way to marmots and your efforts are rewarded with some big views.

After about 2400m you'd be forgiven for thinking the top is around the next corner but the road just keeps on going, all the way up to 2764m, making it the 2nd highest road in Europe and the highest Col! The good news is that what goes up, must

come down and the 30km descent down to Lanslevillard is truly magnificent.

For the restless, the café on the top of the **Col du Mont-Cenis (2083m)** is worth tagging on at the end of the day. Of course, if you feel that doing over 3000m of ascent is essential, then you will just have to make a detour up to the stage ending of **Tignes/Val Claret (2007m)**. Tonight we stay in the ski resort of Lanslebourg-Mt-Cenis.

Classic Route

Col de l'Iseran [82km with 1995m ascent]

Challenge Route

Tignes + Col d'Iseran + Col du Mont-Cenis [112km with 3030m ascent]



Day 3: Lanslebourg to La Grave

The **Col du Galibier (2646m)** was first included in the TdF back in 1911, the same year that this amazing 'military road' you cycle today was finished. French cyclists call it the 'Giant of the Northern Alps' and today we find out why!

The climb starts with a fairly steady 16km over the **Col du Télégraphe (1568m)**, for which you are rewarded with a short descent to the town of Valloire and a timely bakery raid. From here it is straight into the 'real climb' - 22km of astonishingly beautiful cycling! It is a climb that will no doubt stir up some emotion as you can see the top for some time before you reach it. "Down" is the order for the rest of the day to the charming 'off piste' resort of La Grave.

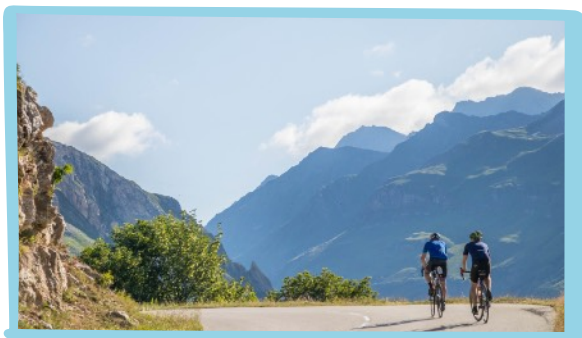
Today there are two optional extras. The first, early in the day, is up to the ski resort of **Valmeinier (1800m)** and the second takes you back up the **Col du Galibier (2646m)** from the south.....well, it is the Challenge route after all!

Classic Route

Col du Télégraphe + Col du Galibier [96km with 2090m ascent]

Challenge Route

Valmeinier + Col du Télégraphe + Col du Galibier north & south [127km with 3260m ascent]



Day 4: La Grave to l'Alpe d'Huez

The **Alpe d'Huez (1845m)** is a climb that has inspired cyclists since it was first included in the TdF in 1952 when Fausto Coppi claimed victory. It has since been used many times and is the grand finale of 'La Marmotte' (the cyclosporitive). Despite 21 relentless hairpin bends, it is actually one of the easier climbs on your tour, so you should be done and dusted by lunchtime. To follow, an afternoon soaking up the sunshine from the balcony of the hotel or a bit of retail therapy in the many bike kit shops in town.

Naturally, there are more cycling options, both involving the picturesque **Col de Sarenne (1999m)**, which is surrounded by high pastures with spectacular views over the Écrins National Park. The Col de Sarenne (1999m) from the west is a very pleasant undulating ride. Meanwhile, our Challenge route takes on the Col de Sarenne (1999m) from the eastern and much steeper side. Although steep, this is a spectacular loop involving a narrow balcony road to get back up to the start of the climb by the Lac du Chambon, and it'll be a highlight of your cycling holiday.

Classic Route

l'Alpe d'Huez [44km with 1180m ascent]

Challenge Route

l'Alpe d'Huez + Col de Sarenne E + W
[up to 92km with 2800m ascent]

Day 5: l'Alpe d'Huez to St Jean de Maurienne

Enjoy a downhill start to the day, traversing on a cliff hugging road down the Oisans valley, before taking on **la Croix-de-Fer (2067m)**. The climb is officially 31km long but the gradients are generally kind. The scenery is stunning and there is a great café half way up. From the col you descend down into St Jean de Maurienne where we stay the night.

As always, there are options for those wanting more: The first detours up to the remote and beautiful **Col du Mollard (1630m)**. The second is

the much feared TdF stage ending of **La Toussuire (1705m)**, which has always been a bit of a battle ground for the polka-dot jersey.

That said, taken slowly it is a very pleasant climb and the views over towards the Écrins National Park are inspiring.

Classic Route

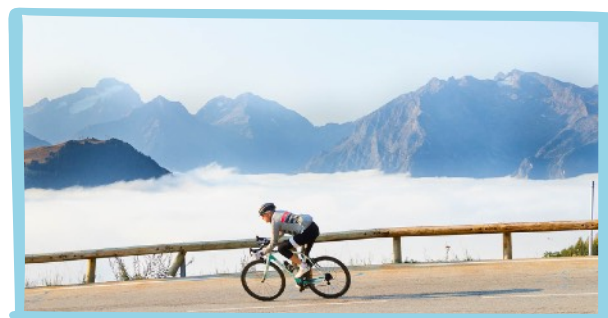
Col de la Croix de Fer [74km with 1550m ascent]

Challenge Route

Col de la Croix de Fer + Mollard + La Toussuire
[117km with 3100m ascent]

Day 6: St Jean to Albertville

It's not the longest or highest, but the **Col de la Madeleine (2000m)** is a cheekily steep climb with the average gradients hovering around 8 or 9% for most of the 19km! The col itself is a very special place and a fitting finale to your trip. The sun terrace of the restaurant has an amazing view of Mt Blanc to the north and the climbs you have conquered to the south. Feel free to linger as long as you like before you free-wheel back down to Albertville, where it all began 6 (great) days ago. If you get back in time it is well worth wandering up to the fortified town which overlooks the hotel.



Today's optional extra was first included in the Tour in 2015 and became an instant classic thanks to its epic hairpin bends: the **Lacets de Montvernier**. They lead you to the remote **Col du Chaussy (1553m)** and neatly back to the Classic Route.

Classic Route

Col de la Madeleine [76km with 1550m ascent]

Challenge Route

Lacets + Chaussy + Col de la Madeleine
[up to 88km with 2200m ascent]

Day 7: Travel Back

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



Start & End

Hotel Ibis Styles: 23 Av. des Chasseurs Alpins,
73200 Albertville (+33 663 685 232)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to GVA'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving in Geneva a day early to help you acclimatise to the new time zone before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

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

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Driving

The start hotel has a car park, so it is possible to leave your car there, as we return for the last night of the holiday.

Foreign Travel Advice

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

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and to **Geneva airport (GVA)** are included in the holiday price. The transfer from Geneva airport to Albertville can take up to 2hrs, depending on traffic.

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 Classic Cols of the Pyrenees, Corsica, Sardinia, Catalonia 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 670km+ with 17100m of ascent during your week, which is right up there with some of our Raid trips. In terms of comparing our Classic Cols Challenge routes, this itinerary is comparable to our Pyrenean and Southern Alps itineraries. Our Dolomites Challenge route in comparison has slightly less km but more climbing.

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.

Please note that carbon wheels with rim brakes are unsuitable for this holiday. Find more info about this in our [FAQ section](#) on the webpage.

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!

"The way the route is planned to climb so many of the famous TDF climbs is superb. It was so nice to see that [the guides] so much enjoyed and contributed to making the holiday experience so special and memorable for all..."
Geoff S

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 a selection of 2 and 3* hotels with ensuite 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 on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Access to Marmot App with daily holiday info, directions, maps and GPS files
- 7 nights half board accommodation and table wine during dinner (up to half a bottle per person), or up to 2 beers or 2 soft drinks.
- 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).

